Super Sleuth Contest! Details On Page 4

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ELECTRONIC FUNDZ

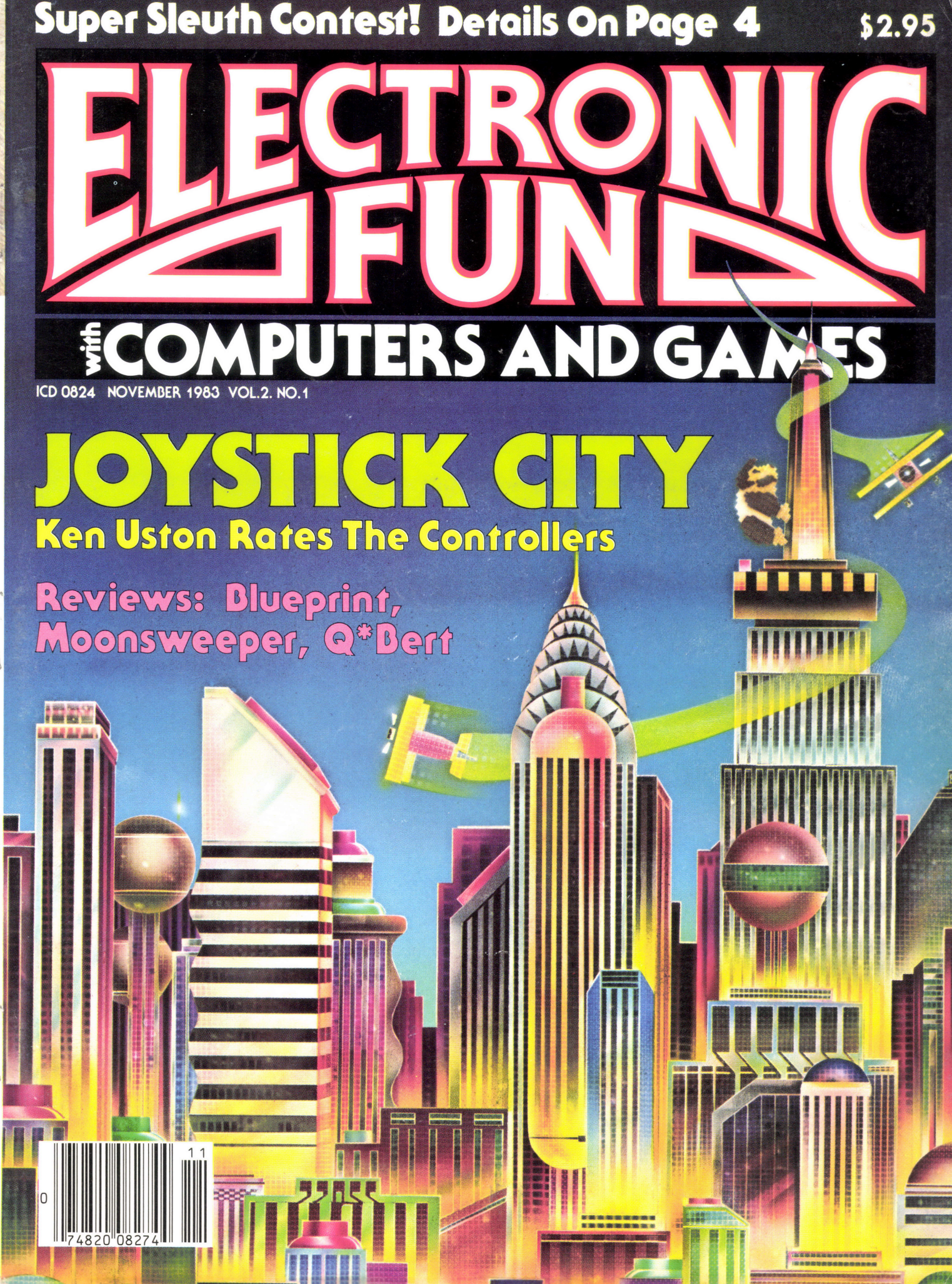
with COMPUTERS AND GAMES

ICD 0824 NOVEMBER 1983 VOL.2. NO.1

JOYSTICK CITY

Ken Uston Rates The Controllers

Reviews: Blueprint, Moonsweeper, Q*Bert



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Look what we have in store for your Atari.

Arti Haroutunian has done it again.

The mind behind our first Atari® success, *Kid Grid,* has just dreamed up another one: *Juice!*

And if you don't think that's electrifying, consider what the experts are saying.

Electronic Fun with Computers and Games says that *Kid Grid* "may sound like kid stuff, but it isn't. Even on the slowest setting ...the game is quick enough to challenge almost anyone."

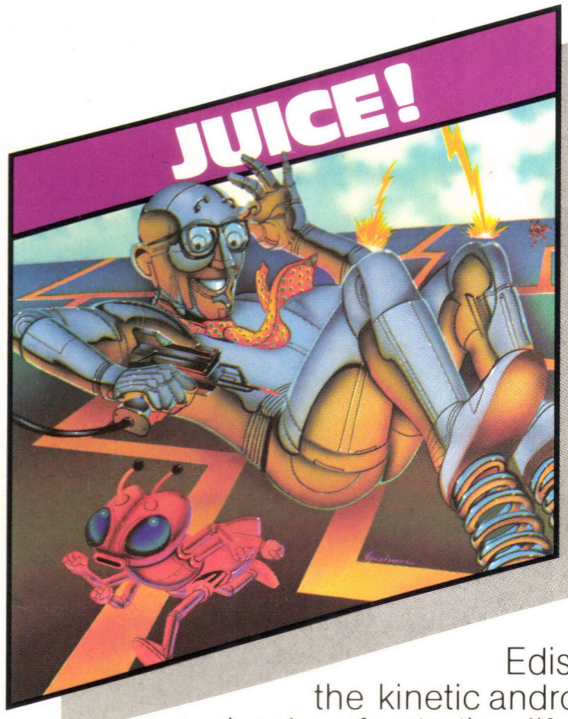
That's right. And that's not all.

Electronic Games calls the Kid "Hypnotic, appealing, fast-moving arcade action of the highest calibre, ...one of the most compulsive, utterly addictive contests in the world of computer gaming."

We couldn't agree more.

What will the critics say about *Juice!?* Will they like its colorful graphics, superior sound effects, charming characters and challenging play patterns?

Why wait around to find out?



Edison, the kinetic android, leads a frustrating life.

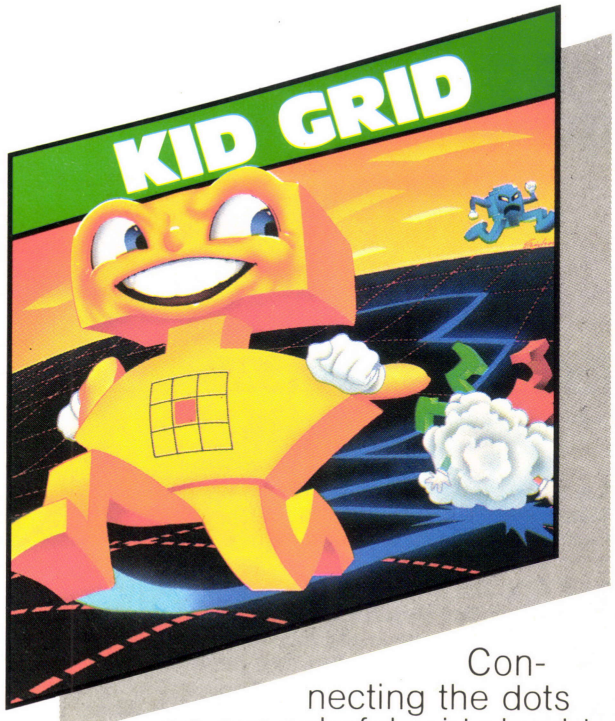
All he wants to do is build his circuit boards and go with the flow. But things keep getting in the way.

Nohms—a negative influence—bug him constantly. Flash, the lightning dolt, disconnects everything in his path.

And the cunning Killerwatt is out to fry poor Edison's brains.

You'll get a charge out of this one. And a few jolts, too!

(Requires 32K memory. Suggested retail $29.95)



Connecting the dots on our colorful grid should be easy, right?

Wrong. Because the bullies are in hot pursuit!

Squashface, Thuggy, Muggy and Moose are their names. And *you* are their game. And what's more, they're faster than you are.

But you're smarter. And you control the stun button.

So keep your eyes peeled for the mysterious question mark and don't slow down at corners!

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ELECTRONIC FUN with COMPUTERS & GAMES

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JOYSTICK CITY *By Ken Uston* So many joysticks . . . so little time. If that's how you feel about all the joystick replacements currently on the market, you need help. Specifically, video game expert Ken Uston's help. Ken plays with and evaluates 28 popular joystick models in this exclusive EF report.....**26**

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GAME WORKOUT: OF BEASTS AND BUTLERS *By Michael Blanchet* Adventure on the high keys—computer keys that is. *EF*'s comprehensive roundup of games involving dragons, mysterious hidden jewels, pirates, detectives and other imaginary characters. Your only limit is your imagination . . . and the computer's vocabulary.....**42**

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OFF THE BEATEN TRAKBALL DEPT: EF'S DICTIONARY OF OVEREXTENDED BASIC *By Randi Hacker* A quick perusal of BASIC commands will tell you that several useful ones have somehow been left out. And what good is a language unless it grows to meet the needs of its speakers or, in this case, typists? Hence this dictionary which adds such useful commands as STROLL, PEEKABOO and COMEIN to the vocabulary and also lets you tell your computer where to GOTO (and we don't mean line 1060 either).....**47**

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HITS & MISSILES Randi Hacker gives *Q*Bert* a nose job; George Kopp cleans Jupiter's moons with *Moonsweeper*; Michael Blanchet destroys the behemoth airship in *Dreadnaught Factor*; Ed Hulse disarms a homicidal maniac in *Halloween*; Scooter Evans helps *Ladybug* fly away home; Marc Berman escorts a little old *Frogger* across the road, enters the *Star Castle* and storms the *Fortress of Narzod*; Michael Blanchet flirts with *Ms Pac-Man* and Michael Brown hits the *Wall Ball.* Plus computer games: Charles Ardai gets no champagne out of *Kickman*; *Monty Plays Scrabble* with Randi Hacker and wins; Robert Alonso burns rubber in *Lemans*; it's Shisha van Horn vs. Izod in *Preppie I and II* and George Kopp sees his *Lifespan* flash before his eyes. And many, many more.....**58**

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Cover Illustration: Frank Riley

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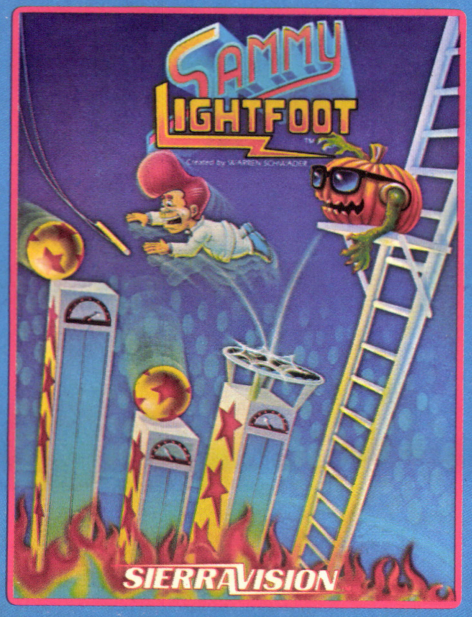
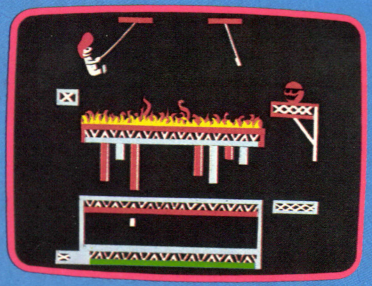
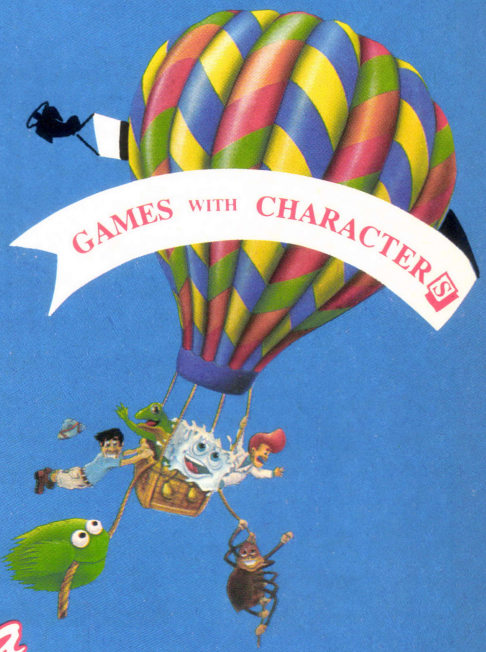
FLY HIGH WITH SAMMY!

Sammy Lightfoot's itching to break into show business. He's lined up an audition, and now you must put him through the toughest three rings of excitement this side of Barnum and Bailey. Run, leap, bounce and swing your way to the top in Scene One. Hop and glide through Scene Two. Dodge, duck and fly in Scene Three. The pace quickens through 12 levels of action, each with three scenes. Sammy Lightfoot's ready for the biggest break of his career. How about you?







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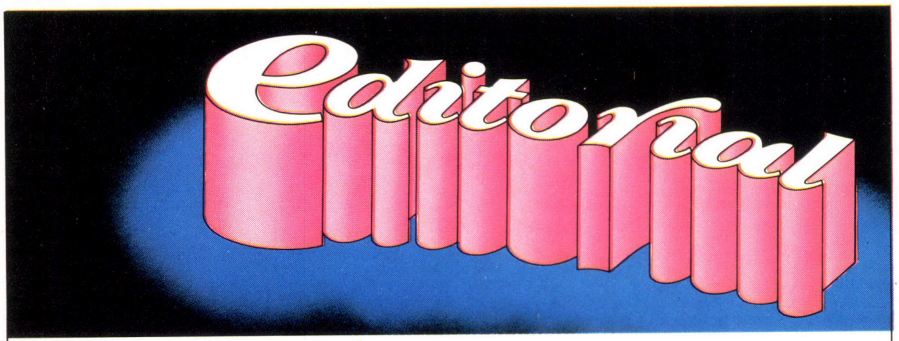

Jumping for joysticks

One year ago the world was stunned by the appearance of a new magazine, Electronic Fun With Computers and Games. *Here it is our lucky thirteenth issue, and we're more stunning than ever. I myself was pretty stunned when the Fly came buzzing into the office not long ago with a hot flash—Atari is bringing out its hit games on many more systems, including ColecoVision, Intellivision, TI 99/4A, Apple, Commodore 64, VIC-20 and IBM PC. And get this—Atari has the rights to* Donkey Kong *for cassette and disk, meaning that Atari will make* DK *for Coleco's Adam!*

SUPER SLEUTH CONTEST: *We're going controller crazy this month at* EF *and everywhere we look we see joysticks, trackballs and fire buttons. Even walking down the street. Our cover and the illustration on pages 26-27 is an artist's rendition of how our fair city looks to us these days. Can you help us out of our rut? Count the controllers hidden in the inside illustration (p. 26-27) and win a Zircon Z-Stick! Put the number on a postcard along with your name, address and phone number and send it to Electronic Fun Controller Contest, 350 East 81 St., New York, NY 10028. Entires must be postmarked no later than Nov. 15 to be eligible. The winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries by* EF's *BOPR computer (Big On Picking Results).*

The BOPR has been working overtime tabulating the Hall Of Fun ballots you've been sending in. Don't miss the results in our December issue.

Greg Keyes

Fun & Games Publishing Inc. President: Richard Ekstract. Controller: Neil Rose.

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Today you'll also know Datasoft by another name. The name is Gentry Software. And through it Datasoft brings you 12 unbelievable programs at prices you'll have to see to believe.

Retailing for between $14.95 and $19.95, each of these new software packages combine action graphics with encounters that will challenge the reflexes of your hand, eye and mind. The Gentry selection includes games like Sea Bandit,™ Magneto Bugs,™ Formula 1 Racer,™ Starbase Fighter,™ Maniac Miner™ and Alien Munchies.™ The unique game play is compatible with either the Atari 400/800 and 1200 or Apple Computers depending on the program. Some even feature "Double Packs" in which both disk and cassette versions are included in one box.

What's in a name? Well, when it's Gentry Software from Datasoft, the name means more excitement than you bargained for. With prices that are sure to take the gamble out of the game.

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Put a mouse in your house

NEWPORT CONTROLS

Prostick 2002 $29.95

The eyes of Newport Controls are upon Texas—Texas Instruments, that is. And even more specifically, the TI 99/4A computer. The Prostick 2002 (which is in fact, a Prostick II—and that is pictured above—with a special interface unit included) comes with the Newport Controls exclusive 4-way/8-way Switchable Gateplate. This feature allows you to select either 4-way or 8-way operation. Eight-way joysticks do not always work properly on TI arcade games such as *Munchman* because the diagonal inputs cause unpredictable results and erratic movement. To correct this problem, the Prostick 2002 has a selectable dial which enables you to lock out the diagonal directions when playing arcade games. The two different settings are marked on the joystick so you can simply set the desired mode. In addition, the 2002 comes with soft-touch firing buttons at the top end of the base. This means easy access for both right- and left-handed players.

Newport Controls
15425 Los Gatos Boulevard
Los Gatos, CA 95030

ZIRCON

Track-Ball Under $50

There's no shortage of games that can be played better with a trakball controller. Unfortunately, for a long time there was a sorry dearth of trakballs for the 2600. Now Atari has one and so does Zircon, the makers of the Z-Stick. According to the folks at Zircon, the Zircon Track-Ball controller provides instant on-screen response over a full

360 degree field. For your edification, a trakball operates by reading the speed and rotational direction of a free spinning ball and translating that directly into movement on the screen. The Zircon Track-Ball offers the quick response of arcade trakballs. In addition, the Track-Ball offers Dual Fire Buttons and a fully Variable Autofire setting. The Dual Fire Buttons are mounted on a recessed ledge on the unit. According to Zircon, this places your firing fingers out of the way of the spinning ball and reducing the chances of inadvertently stopping a good spin. Also, the firing buttons are easily accessed by both right- and left-handed players. The Variable Autofire switch changes the fire buttons from single shot to automatic machine-gun rapid fire.

Zircon
475 Vandell Way
Campbell, CA 95008

QUESTAR

Blaster! $12.95

Okay. So you've got your single shot and you've got your rapid fire but up until now, your choices have been limited to those two. What about Other? What about being able to fire at a rate of speed somewhere in between? With the Blaster! from Questar, you can dial the firing speed you want. The Blaster! plugs in between the game console and the joystick and allows you to dial in the firing rate to

new products

match the game software and your preference. And since it can be adjusted to a single shot mode, there's no need to plug and unplug the module. It works on most shoot-em-ups and interfaces with the VCS, Atari 400 and 800, ColecoVision, Sears Tele-Games and the Commodore 64 and Vic-20.
Questar
670 NW Pennsylvania Avenue
Chehalis, WA 98532

WICO

Mice: Apple II $179.95, IBM $99.95

There's Mickey, there's Mighty, there's Minnie and now there's Command Control. Mouse, that is. The Mouse from Wico is ergonomically designed to fit both your hand and your mind. There are models for both the Apple and IBM. The mouse can assist you in all sorts of operations on your computer. You simply put it on the table top and roll it around with your hand pressing one or another button now and then. Doing this, you can make data additions or deletions or reposition copy at the touch of a button, move the cursor to a symbol or location on a menu and select that operation also at the touch of a button or plot graphics for bar charts or graphs. It can also be used as a sensitive game controller for games such as checkers or chess. The Command Control Mouse has custom-designed encoder wheels which afford high resolution. This means that less mouse movement is required to move the cursor across the screen. There are only three function buttons but they can be used for any number of program applications without having to refer back to the keyboard all the time. The Command Control Mouse requires an IBM or Apple controller card which Wico will also market. The Mouse comes with a five-foot cord for more freedom of movement. It does not have to be fed.
WICO
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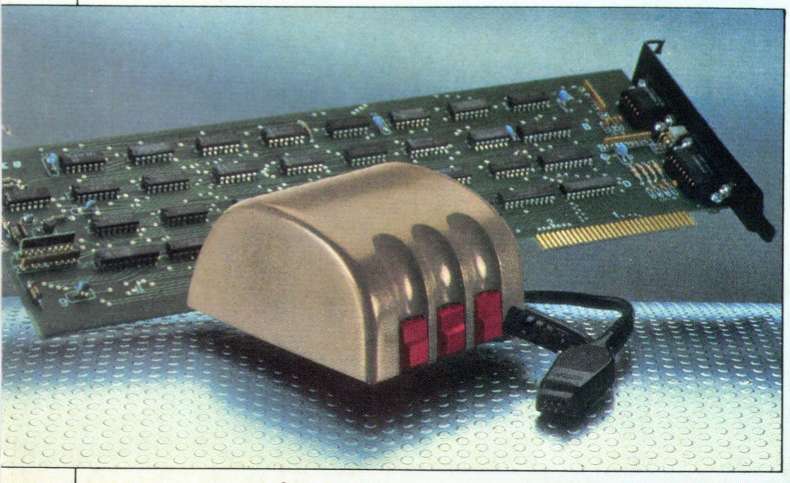
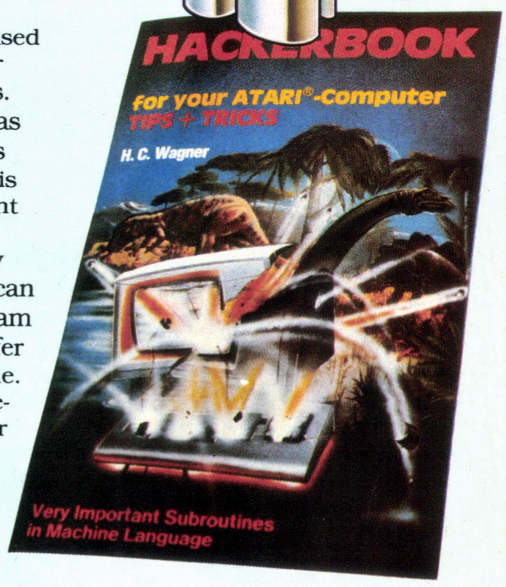
Niles, IL 60648



ELCOMP

Hackerbook I $9.95

You computer programmers are never satisfied. No sooner do you master BASIC then you're belly-aching about Machine Language. Never mind that it consists of a lot of confusing ones and zeros and has commands that put Neanderthal monosyllables to shame. There will be no end to your complaining until you have learned it. Well, who can blame you? Machine language is much faster than BASIC in that it is *the* language that the computer speaks requiring no translation or compiler. This means that programs written in machine language run at a super speed. Thank goodness there are books that will teach you. This is one of them. *The Hackerbook I* contains some very powerful machine language subroutines designed specifically for the Atari computers from 600 through 1200. It includes "work horse" programs which a machine language programmer will need to solve day-to-day problems: Text input and output, math routines, disk and cassette file handling and instructions on how to write your own RS232 and Centronics drives. It even teaches you how to build your own EPROM burner. Not bad for a non-magnetic medium.
Elcomp Publishing
53 Redrock Lane
Pomona, CA 91766



Space Grannies; patchwork PC

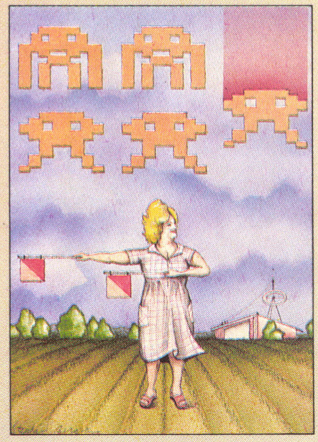
A Good Old Quilting K

All we've been hearing for the last couple of years is how computers are going to replace human beings one of these days.

It seems okay for computers to replace future human beings. In fact, we wouldn't mind if computers replaced some of our contemporaries. But when electronics threatens to replace some of our forefathers—more specifically some of our foremothers—well, that's going too far. Quilting and weaving have become computerized. That's right. No more evenings around the hearth, chatting with the girls and putting together patchwork quilts. The computer quilting program does it all for you. You can choose from 250 shapes, and seven colors. You enter your choices into the computer and the screen then fills with shapes in a symmetrical, repeated pattern. There's also an electronic floor loom in the works which will single-handedly operate a loom, lift the harnesses and pass the warp with the thread through. What a shame our foremothers didn't have these programs. But then they didn't have electricity either so what good would it have been?

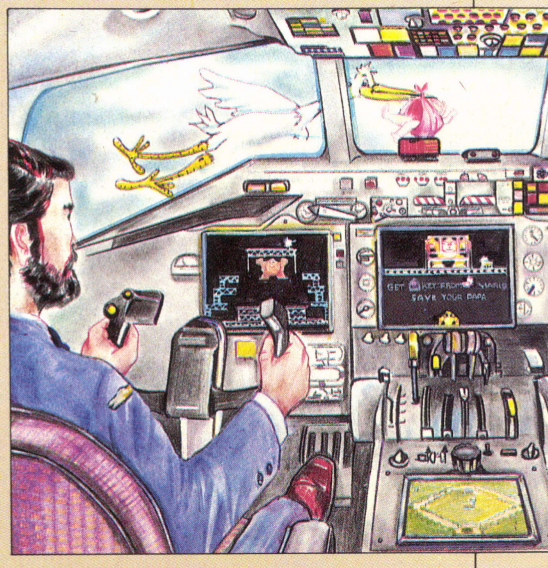
Shuttlebutt

Who says old people are behind the times? Some of them are way out ahead of it and others, like Ruth Norman, are simply out of it. Ms. Norman, an 83-year-old great-grandmother from El Cajon, CA, is the head of Unarius Educational Foundation, an organization that is preparing a landing site for extraterrestrials. Ms. Norman looks down her nose at such childish pursuits as *Space Invaders*. Ms. Norman herself has visited 32 planets and says that the main thing that operates a spaceship is the mind. (Someone should tell NASA about this. They've been wasting all their money on rocket fuel.) A model of the space city is on display at Unarius' headquarters. It lights up and flashes but doesn't really do anything. The actual engineering of the real thing, says Norman, will be done by "the space brothers." Who are they? And are they any relation to the Mario Brothers?

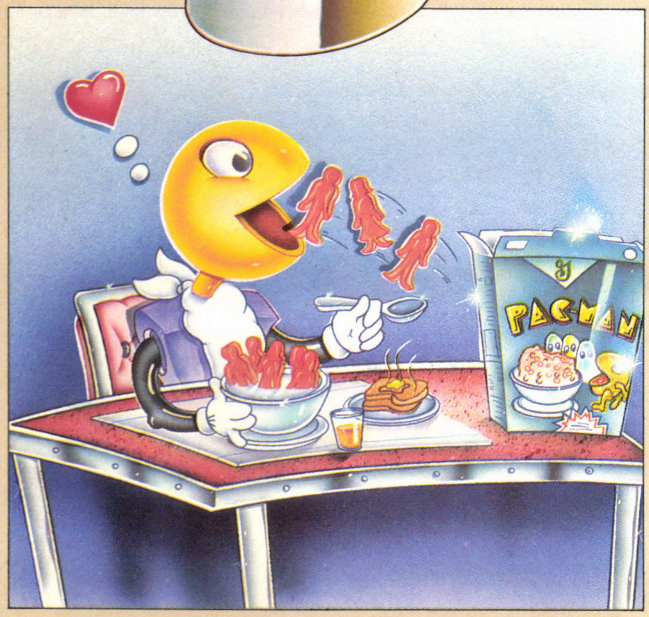


Airplane III — The Game

If you're anything like we are, flying is no fun. We cry from take off to landing and then kiss the ground once we're safely upon it. We're so desperate we'll even kiss the ground of New York City, which may be even more dangerous to our health than the actual flying. Anyway, with fright in mind, Canadian Pacific Air has put in something to take our minds off the fact that we are 30,000 feet above terra firma—video games. In June, six portable video game sets were for rent in the non-movie section of the planes. The games, which fit snugly over the dinner trays, included *Blackjack*, *Baseball*, *Boxing*, *Donkey Kong*, *Snoopy Tennis* and *Mickey Mouse*. If this proves popular, CP Air is considering building permanent sets into the trays which could eventually become more sophisticated and offer not only games but flight and safety information and, maybe, computer capabilities. Shades of HAL. For now, though it proves the old adage: it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you game the plane.



Stitches

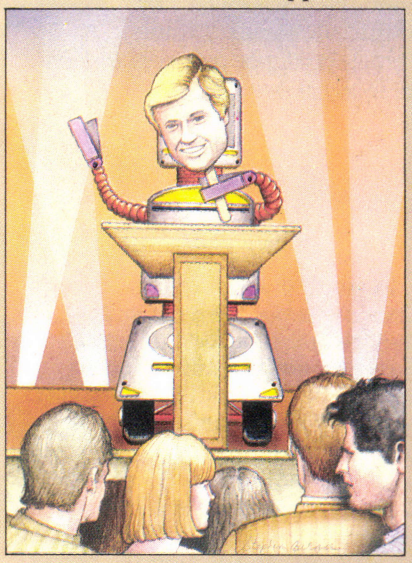


The Kid That Ate Pac-Man

Pac-Man haters, your turn is at hand. Or at mouth, if you prefer. Those of you who are sick to death of watching Pac-Man gobble dots and succumb again and again to the stupid ghosts can finally get back at him by turning the tables and eating Pac-Man. Yes, there's a new breakfast cereal from General Mills, *Pac-Man* cereal. It consists of some Kix-like corn nodules, and, inspired by Lucky Charms, yellow marshmallow Pac-Men and multi-colored marshmallow ghosts. The very thought is revolting but, I expect, if your desire to get back at all the nausea the Yellow Fellow has caused you through the years is strong enough, you'll swallow anything. As if this weren't enough, Ralston Purina has come out with *Donkey Kong* cereal, no ingredients of which resemble even vaguely the characters in that game. Thank goodness. I don't know that I could force down anything that looked like a gorilla, no matter what its flavor. And when it comes to Italian food, I prefer lasagna to carpenters. Anyway, what we're waiting for now is the news that Bally Midway (or someone) is going to sue General Mills for using certain edible electronic patents in an un-authorized manner to create the cereal. By the way, you get no points for eating these cereals nor do you receive extra men for clearing the first bowl. Given the amount of sugar in breakfast cereals today, the only thing you do get is sweet revenge.

The Sundance Robot

We've been addressed by some strange characters at our various commencement exercises —one of the strangest being Robert Young who spoke at the University of Michigan med school graduation ceremony. Here's one even stranger. The prominent leader who addressed the graduating class of Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland was none other than Robot Redford. Wearing a formal bow tie, Robot (or Redford) rolled to the stage and told the 685 graduates that humans must learn to work together with robots and technology to solve society's problems. Fortunately for Robert Redford, the man, there is no threat of having to relinquish his gorgeous leading man status to his semi-namesake. Robot is photographic but not photogenic as proven by the television camera mounted on his chrome head. He also sports a TV monitor in his chest and his four-foot, 175-pound white fiberglass body has four speakers on it. No matter how dynamic a speaker he may be, it's tough to find a suit that fits him. His lack of good looks notwithstanding, he can still probably carve himself a fine career on the silver screen. In what motion pictures you might ask? Well, they could star him opposite C3P0 in an entirely electronic remake of *The Odd Couple* or they could do a whole new series of movies about a naive young robot whose father is an advice-giving judge. Title? *Android Rooney Grows Up.*



Illustrations: Tim Parker, Stephen Berger, Tom Nuberry, Dana Ventura, Stephen Berger

letters

APOCALYPSE RE-VIEWED

I have just read Mr. Paul Backer's review of *Fort Apocalypse* in the August *EF*. Either his version of the game is defective or he is blind—it certainly did not deserve such a low rating. I have this game and it looks very little like Backer's description. For instance, on the second level the walls are green, not "invisible." Both beams have to hit the alien or the center or middle of the two beams must hit it. And regarding the tanks, if he'd looked in the instructions he'd have found out the tanks can only be destroyed by hitting the treads. I think *Fort Apocalypse* deserves *at least* three joysticks.

Chris Russo
Wyckoff, NJ

SGM HASHED

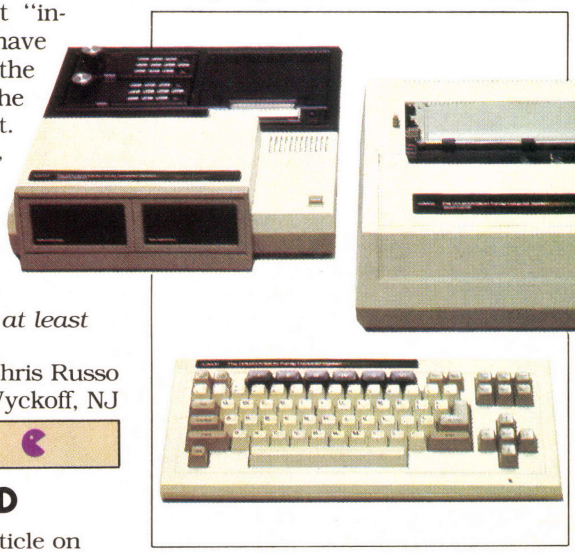
Regarding your June article on Coleco's Super Game Module—they've got to be kidding, right? The *Super Smurf* graphics are zero percent better than the original; as usual, they still can't match their publicity mockups. And who would possibly want to buy *another Donkey Kong*, despite new sequences? Everything's exactly the same! Between this and the pathetic controllers, I'm ready to chuck my Coleco and buy another VCS. Why can't they design original, *creative* games that aren't based on re- and re-again-hashed arcade games? Phooey. Give me *Escape From the Mindmaster* over this any day.

Jim Cirile
Yonkers, NY

Considering that the SGM isn't going to come out for awhile, we guess you weren't the only one who feels this way.

ADAM, I'M MAD

I own a ColecoVision and was looking forward to buying the new Coleco computer, Adam. But when I read your August issue and saw it was going to cost $600, I really got



mad. I think that price is sick—what is it, made of gold or something?

Del Guidarella
East White Plains, NY

Well, let's be fair. We heard a price of $100 long ago, but that was when Coleco was planning a keyboard only. The Adam package now includes a letter-quality printer, tape storage device and built-in software, not just a keyboard—and any one of those peripherals might cost you $600 if you bought them separately for some other computer systems. And since you own a ColecoVision, you can get the whole package as an add-on—for only $400.

AND ONE MORE...

Shocked by the news from *EF* that I must purchase $400 worth of expandability to keyboardize my Coleco, I almost considered selling the unit. Instead, I called Coleco. They said if response was large enough, they would sell the keyboard separately. So start calling, Coleco owners! The number is 1-800-842-1225.

Steve
Baltimore, MD

BACK FUN REDUX

I purchased my first *EF* in March at a store. I enjoyed it so much I bought the next month's issue, and that one was just as good as the first, so I ordered a year's subscription. My question is, can I still get the first few issues that I missed?

Darvin R. Ward
Oklahoma City, OK

Yes, Darvin, you can—back issues from our first in November 1982 to the present are still available. You can order them by sending your name, address, a list of the issues you want and $3.00 for each copy to Back Issues, EF, 350 East 81st Street, New York, NY 10028. Our circulation folks will get them back to you postpaid—but hurry, they're going fast.

COIN-OP COMMENT

This guy William Michael Brown is a joke. Why would *Asteroids* experts easily beat *Mad Planets*? The controls are *very* different, and

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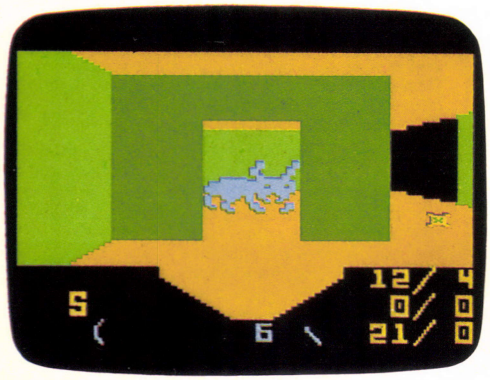

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the concept is somewhat different. Please explain, Mr. Brown. Does this mean that *Asteroids* experts should find themselves beating *Sinistar*, *Moon Patrol* and every other game with rocks and planets? Also, it sounded like the only reason he didn't like *Mario Bros.* was because he couldn't get past the first screen (Even after 60 plays? I got to the sixth screen on my fourth game). I mean, he senselessly assaulted that game, asking such questions as "What are turtles doing in the basement of an apartment?" Notice he doesn't criticize *Guzzler*, a game he likes, by asking "What's a water container doing with feet?" I have enjoyed your magazine from the beginning; don't make me regret my choice.

Ted Lee
Hollywood, CA

Michael Brown replies: *Your too-rough-on-*Mario Bros. *point may be well-taken, Ted; guess it all depends on how much fantasy you like in an otherwise "realistic" game. I'm not surprised you're doing so well at it, either; I am too. Since the game now in the arcades is* a lot *easier than the one I and other players wrestled with at AOE, I have to believe Nintendo tweaked it a bit before street release. And* of course *there are differences between* Asteroids *and* Mad Planets*—but the basic similarity is obvious to anyone with eyes in his head. As for the controllers... hey, c'mon. If you can destroy tons of flying spacerocks using the complicated button layout in* Asteroids, *why can't you destroy tons of flying spacerocks using the much simpler joystick in* Mad Planets?

LOVE THAT B.O.B.

In your April issue, you had an article about Androbots and artificial intelligience. I was, to say the least, astounded at what I read. I'd like to get the address of Androbot Corporation so I can get more information about B.O.B.

Jeff Nelson
Owatonna, MN

Sure thing, Jeff: Androbot Inc., 1287 Lawrence Station Road, Sunnyvale, CA 94086. We have a follow up article about Artificial Intelligence in the works too, so be on the lookout for it in either our December or January issue.

TRUCKIN' TRASHED

I've just had an opportunity to see your July review of Imagic's *Truckin'*. I am greatly disappointed in this review, presented in what I consider the finest video game magazine available to date. I'm quite aware that everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but the reviewers missed out on the most important aspect of this game—that it is *educational*. As in his first game, *Micro Surgeon*, designer Rick Levine has tried to give us a little more than just a mindless, non-logical game, and I think he deserves some commendation. In *Truckin'* you are given a very useful geography lesson on the locations of around 60 U.S. cities, and in *Micro Surgeon* the locations of the various inner organs of the body are stressed. To top it off, both games are challenging and fun to play. The reviewers were also quick to point out that when you crash in *Truckin'* the windshield cracks and that you can guess what caused the break. Why haven't I ever read about the majority of games that use weapons to destroy the opposition? Where were your moral standards then? I think it's time your eyes and minds were opened up to all aspects when rating cartridges.

Martin Schamus
Plainview, NY

As always, we welcome your comments on the reviews we publish and we don't expect you to agree with every single one of them. Thanks for writing.

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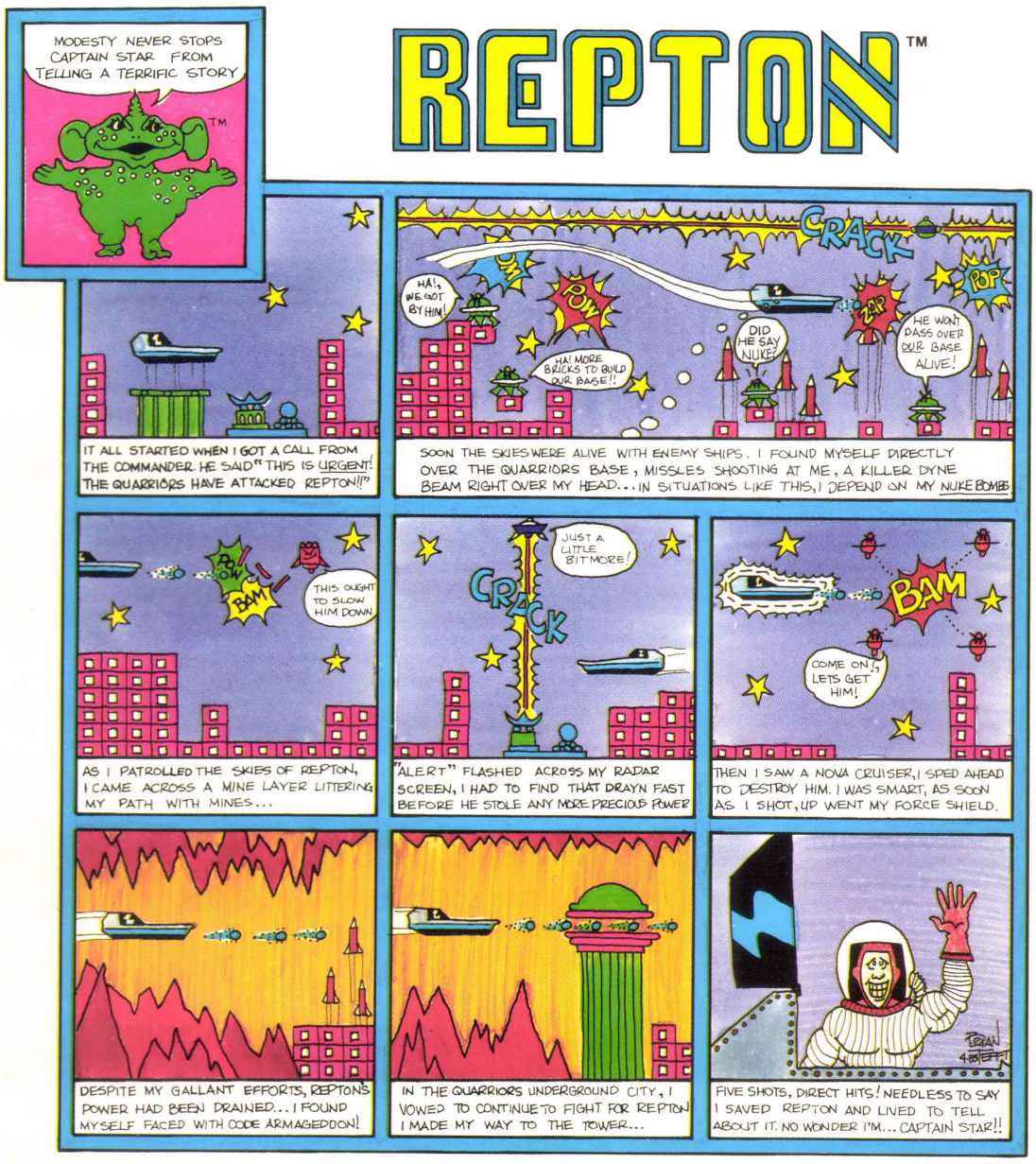

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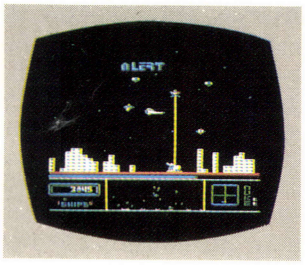

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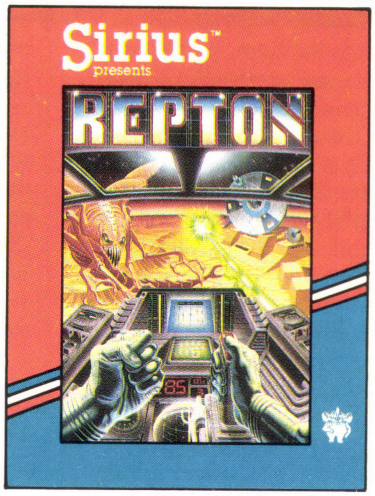
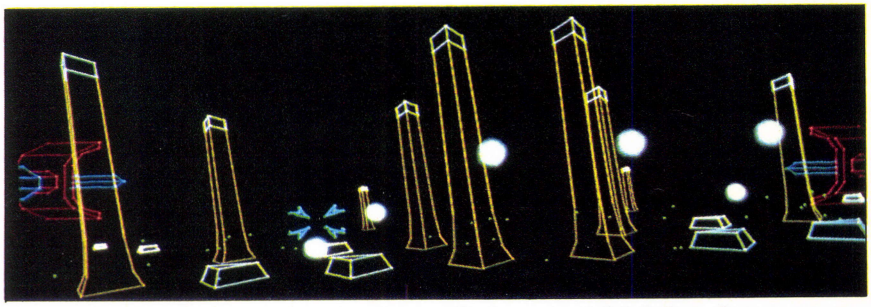
Game design by Dan Thompson and Andy Kaluzniacki



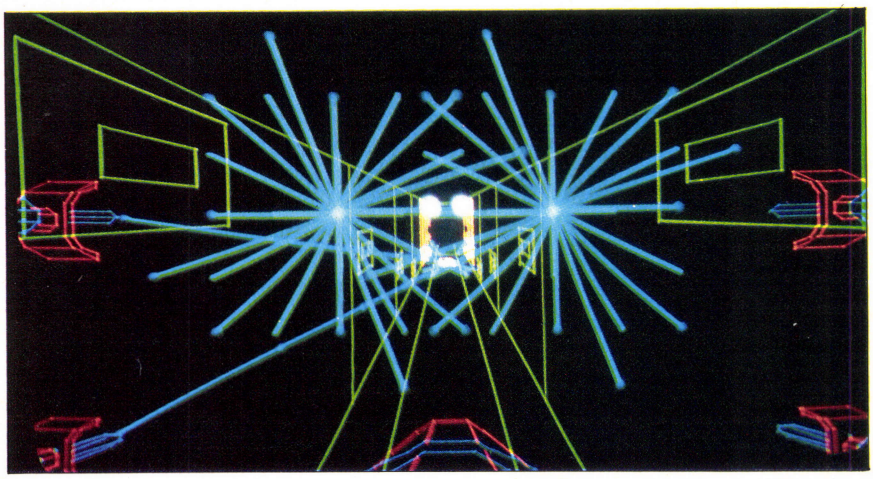
Star Wars and Dragon's Lair:

By Michael Blanchet

STAR WARS



There are two types of games that have consistently bombed with the public: games based on popular movies and games where the player witnesses the action from a first person perspective. The movie games that have fizzled are almost too numerous to list here. As for first person contests, *Battle Zone* and *Subroc 3D* are two prime examples. In light of this, it is truly amazing that Atari has been able to fuse both of these otherwise losing concepts into one solid piece of exhilarating coin-op challenge: *Star Wars*.



In this game—which, by the way, does considerable justice to the first George Lucas flick of the same name (Lucas himself, I've heard, is "quite happy" with the way the game turned out)—you are cast as Luke Skywalker. Your ultimate hope is to destroy the Death Star by popping a pair of photon torpedoes down a thermal exhaust port hidden at the end of a long trench. Before you can do that, however, you must first do battle out in space with Darth Vader and his merry band of Tie Fighters, cruise across the Death Star surface while blasting towers and bunkers, and finally navigate the trench, avoiding hazardous catwalks and fire from Imperial gun turrets all the way. Assuming you survive, you're then given a split second or so to drop your torpedoes.

For those unfamiliar with first person games, a brief lesson: In most games of this type, what you see at any given moment is only a fraction of the entire playfield. It's a lot like driving a car: Although your chief concern is the road in front of you, you still need to be aware of the traffic to your right, left and rear.

Although it is a true first person game, the driving analogy doesn't quite apply to *Star Wars*. While you still need to watch your height when navigating the trench, and your right and left sides when flying through the towers, you can forget about covering your rear and, in most instances, your port and starboard sides as well. Unlike other first person games, such as *Battle Zone*, nothing of any significance ever goes on behind your back; a Tie Fighter may sometimes pass you from behind, for instance, but when he is out of view you can safely forget about him. While flying across the Death Star, you can also go as high or as low as you like. Don't worry about bottoming out—you can't. Finally, during the trench sequence, you can swing from side to side as wildly as the situation calls for—you'll never scrape the walls.

As you probably recall, Luke doesn't die in the movie. He can't die in the game, either—he can only lose all of his deflector shields and fail to complete his mission. Although the machine is programmed to offer a maximum of nine shields, the *Star Wars* in your neighborhood will probably be set for six. Each time you take a hit, or collide with

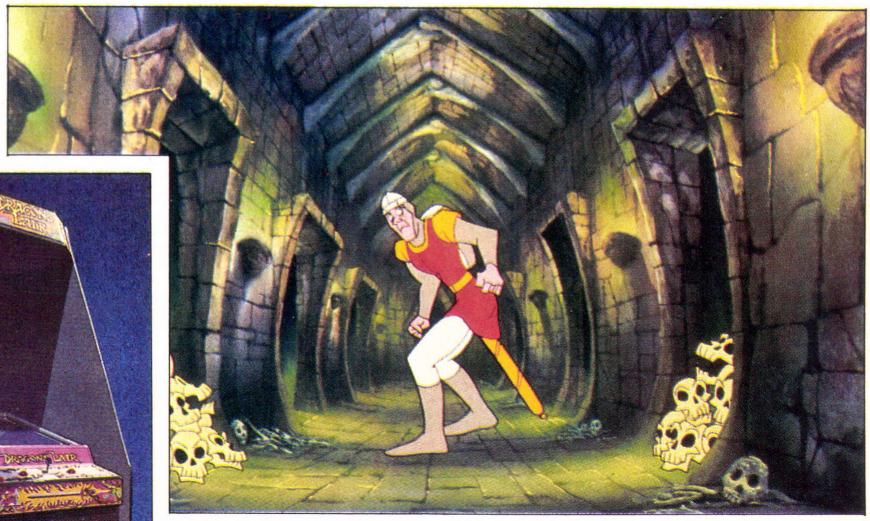
Continued on page 85

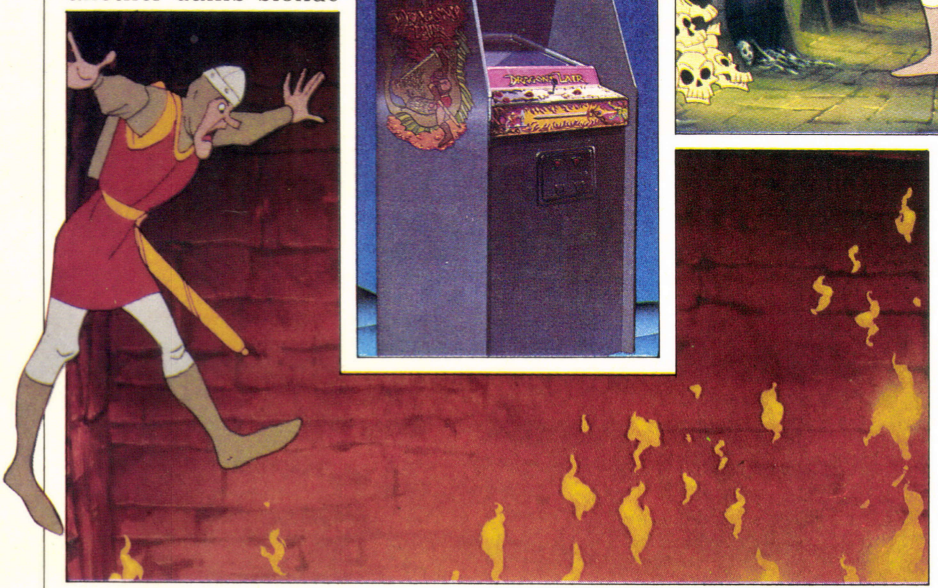
screen plays

The laser and the laser disc

DRAGON'S LAIR

Video games—games with computer-generated graphics, that is—have come a long way since *Pong*. Interactive laserdisc games—which is what *Dragon's Lair* is—haven't been around as long, so they're still crude by comparison. Although *Dragon's Lair* boasts new names, new technology and a look all its own, it is remarkably similar to a good number of arcade machines you and I have played before. If you dissect the scenario, you'll see that you, portrayed by Dirk the Daring, are out to save yet another dumb blonde being held against her will by a nasty chap who runs a house of horrors. So don't feel that you have to play this one differently from any other game. You don't.





"Aren't there some differences in approach, though?" you ask. Well, look at it this way. Think of a game, *Defender* for example, and list all the things the game's program doesn't allow you to do. Aside from flying off the upper and lower edges of the screen, you can do just about anything you'd like. Feel like flying fast? Go ahead. Slow? That's fine, too. The bottom line here is that although you must work within certain rules and parameters, you are free to play the game in any fashion you see fit. *Dragon's Lair*, on the other hand, does not give you this same freedom of choice.

Programming buffs may liken *Dragon's Lair* to a flowchart, but I think of it in terms of a train ride—once you step on the train you can't get off until you reach the next station. During most of the game you sit back and watch Dirk do the things that heroes do when they're out trying to rescue damsels in distress. At certain points, Dirk is faced with a decision and it is your job to tell him what to do. Theoretically, Dirk can move in four directions (up, down, left or right) and he can also draw his sword on your command. Most times though, only one correct move exists and the outcome of that move will be, for the most part, identical from one game to the next.

In simple terms, then, you spend more time watching *Dragon's Lair* and less time actually playing it. The trick is discovering at which points

Continued on page 92

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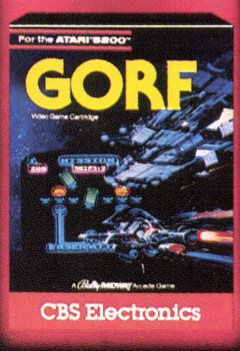

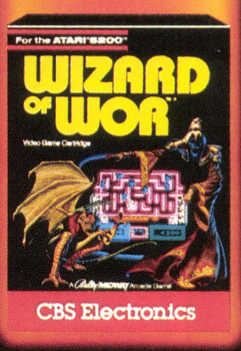

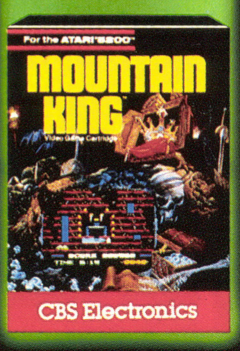

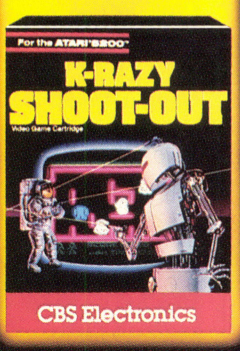

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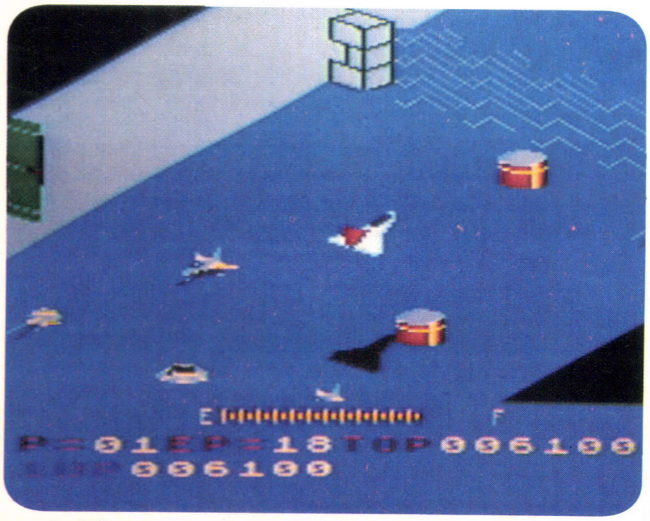
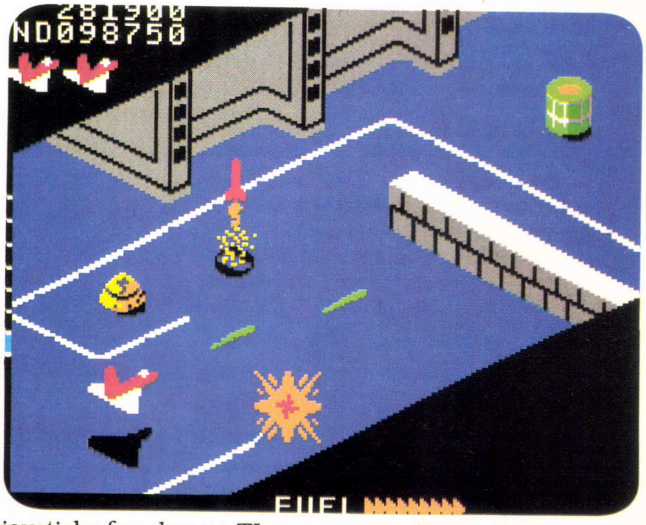
Input Output

The case of the missing Zorks

I've been wondering if Coleco's graphics are the same, better or worse than the Atari 5200's. Since the 5200 has the same graphics capability as the Atari 400 computer, one way to figure out whose graphics are better would be to compare Coleco's ColecoVision ZAXXON with Datasoft's ZAXXON for the 400. The thing is, I've never seen Datasoft's version. Could you print both in your magazine?

Steve MacDonald
Rheem Valley, CA





We aim to please, so here you go Steve: Coleco's *Zaxxon* is on the right, Datasoft's *Zaxxon* is on the left. But do you think your graphics comparison idea is really valid? What about all the other things that matter in a game—like game*play*, speed, the amount of memory space added by a cartridge vs. a disk drive or cassette recorder, how well the programmer has struck a balance between gameplay and graphics, etc.? We aren't sure it proves anything to compare one game with another on the basis of graphics alone—and judging an entire system on the basis of one such comparison is even less useful.

I read in your August issue that the Suncom Joy Sensor is VCS compatible, and that it is also supposed to be TI 99/4A compatible. Well, I've tried an Atari VCS joystick on a TI, and even though it fits in the interface, it doesn't work. So unless some modifications have been made, the Joy Sensor should not work on TI computers. Could you please test it and print the results? It could keep me and others from making a $35 mistake.

Frank Wright
Nashville, TN

Sorry, Frank, our mistake—we should have reminded you that *all* Atari-type digital joysticks require an adaptor in order to be used on TI computers. Suncom, among others, sells one that'll do the job: it's called the TIA, converts all Atari-compatible joysticks for play on TI computers, allows play by either one or two players at a time and lists for $12.95. With that in mind, go ahead and read the results of Ken Uston's Joy Sensor test in this month's roundup without fear.

Is it possible to buy a text adventure game, such as one of the ZORK series, on tape cassette, so that I can load it into my Atari 800 from a program recorder? If so, where can I buy it?

Brian Waytink
Winnipeg, Canada

We haven't heard of any text-only adventures available on tape, Brian, and we don't expect to hear of any; Infocom, for one, has never released *Zork* or any of its other adventures in cassette format, and has no plans to do so in the future. The reason

seems to be that no text adventure is completely loaded into the computer at the beginning of the game; all of them are designed to access a disk very frequently, calling up different portion of the game text according to the commands you type in. Given the long time it takes for a cassette recorder to access different parts of a tape, playing a tape-format adventure would probably be as exciting as watching paint dry.

I've read that the new Super Action Controllers for ColecoVision are for use with the new super games. Does this mean that they can't be used with regular ColecoVision games?

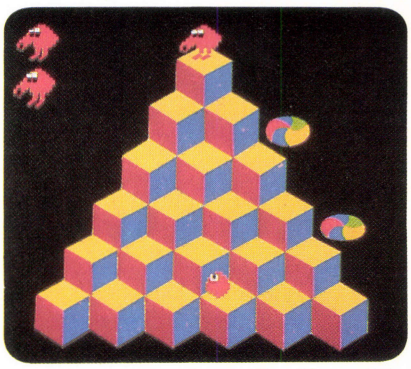
Austin Deptula
Nacogdoches, TX

No it doesn't, Austin. The Super Action Controllers can be used with any Coleco cartridge that can be played with a joystick.

I own a VIC-20, read EF a lot, and hope you can help me with my questions. First, what are the differences (if any) between the 1515 graphic printer and the 1525 printer? What word processors (if any) would you recommend for the VIC? Can the VIC's memory be expanded to more than 32K? And, lastly, does Parker Brothers have plans to make a Q*BERT adaptation for the VIC?

Mark Cowan
Cortez, CO

Let's take them in order, Mark: (1) The differences between the two printers mainly concern the number of characters they print per line and the kind of paper they use. The 1515 prints 12 characters per inch and uses special 7½-inch paper made by Commodore. The 1525 prints 10 characters per inch and uses regular 8½-inch paper. There's also a 1526 printer that is much like the 1525, except that it comes in a sturdier cabinet, is a little more expensive, and a little faster—it uses a full eight-wire dot matrix printhead, instead of the one-wire printhead used in the 1515 and 1525. (2) Three VIC word processors we've tried and liked are the Word Wizard from Microware (a $29.95 cassette), Wordcraft 20 from UMI (a $219.95 cartridge that comes with an extra 8K of memory), and Quick Brown Fox from Protecto Enterprises (a $79.95 cartridge). There are plenty of others, and we'd recommend that before you take our or anyone else's recommendations about which one you should buy, sit down, figure out exactly what you want from a word processor, and then get a lot of hands-on experience with several that seem to fit the bill. Choosing a word processor you'll be really happy with is like choosing a mate—only you can decide what your needs are. (3) It is possible to plug in an extra 8K of memory and bring the total up to 40K, but the operating system of the VIC isn't designed to directly access any more than 32K. You'd have to PEEK and POKE every address in the extra overhead, which might be useful for an extremely complicated game with lots of tables but a real chore for anything else. Commodore says 32K is really the VIC's functional limit. (4) Yes; Parker's VIC *Q*Bert* should already be out by the time you read this, and the company is also planning a Commodore 64 version.



I own a ColecoVision and an Atari VCS. Can I use my Atari with a ColecoVision switchbox or the other way around?

Eric Manna
Tempe, TX

Yes. So far, we've used Atari VCS, ColecoVision, Intellivision and even VIC-20 switchboxes interchangeably and never had a problem. To our knowledge, the only switchboxes that aren't interchangeable are those that connect the console unit to a power source—such as the Atari 5200 switchbox.

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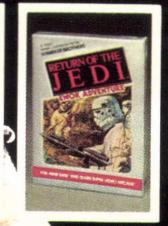
Enter the Death Star™ Battle Home Video Game Sweepstakes.



WIN! OVER 1,150 PRIZES! PARKER BROTHERS

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1. To enter, complete and mail an official entry blank. Be sure to select which scene comes first in the movie, and which screen comes first in the Home Video Game.
2. Enter the sweepstakes as often as you like, but each entry must be mailed separately to:
   Death Star Battle Sweepstakes
   Post Office Box #621, Lowell, IN 46356
   Entries must be received no later than June 30, 1984.
3. You may obtain a Free Official Entry Blank by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Death Star Battle Sweepstakes, P.O. Box #575, Lowell, IN 46356. The correct answers to which scene and screen comes first may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to this same address, marked "CORRECT ANSWERS" in the lower right hand corner of the envelope. Residents of Washington State need not stamp their return envelope.
4. Winners will be selected in random drawings from among all correct entries received by VENTURA ASSOCIATES, INC., an independent judging organization whose decisions are final. The odds of winning are determined by the total number of entries received.
5. One major prize to a family. No substitution for prizes as offered, except as may be necessary due to availability. Taxes are the responsibility of winners.
6. Sweepstakes open to residents of the United States. Employees and families of Parker Brothers, their advertising and production agencies, VENTURA ASSOCIATES, INC., Lucasfilm Ltd. (LFL) and suppliers of prizes are not eligible. Void where prohibited by law. All federal, state and local regulations apply. Winners will be asked to sign an affidavit of eligibility and their names and likenesses may be used for publicity purposes.
7. For a list of major prize winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Death Star Battle Sweepstakes Winners List, P.O. Box #783, Lowell, IN 46356.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

DEATH STAR™ BATTLE SWEEPSTAKES

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A Check the scene that appears first in the movie Star Wars: Return of the Jedi.™

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C Fill in your name and address below and mail your entry to: Death Star™ Battle Sweepstakes, P.O. Box #621, Lowell, Indiana 46356.

MOVIE

☐

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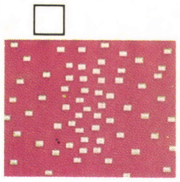
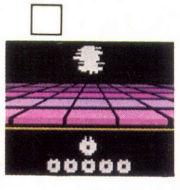
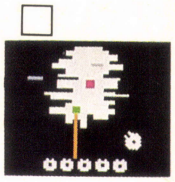
VIDEO GAME

☐ 

☐ 

☐ 

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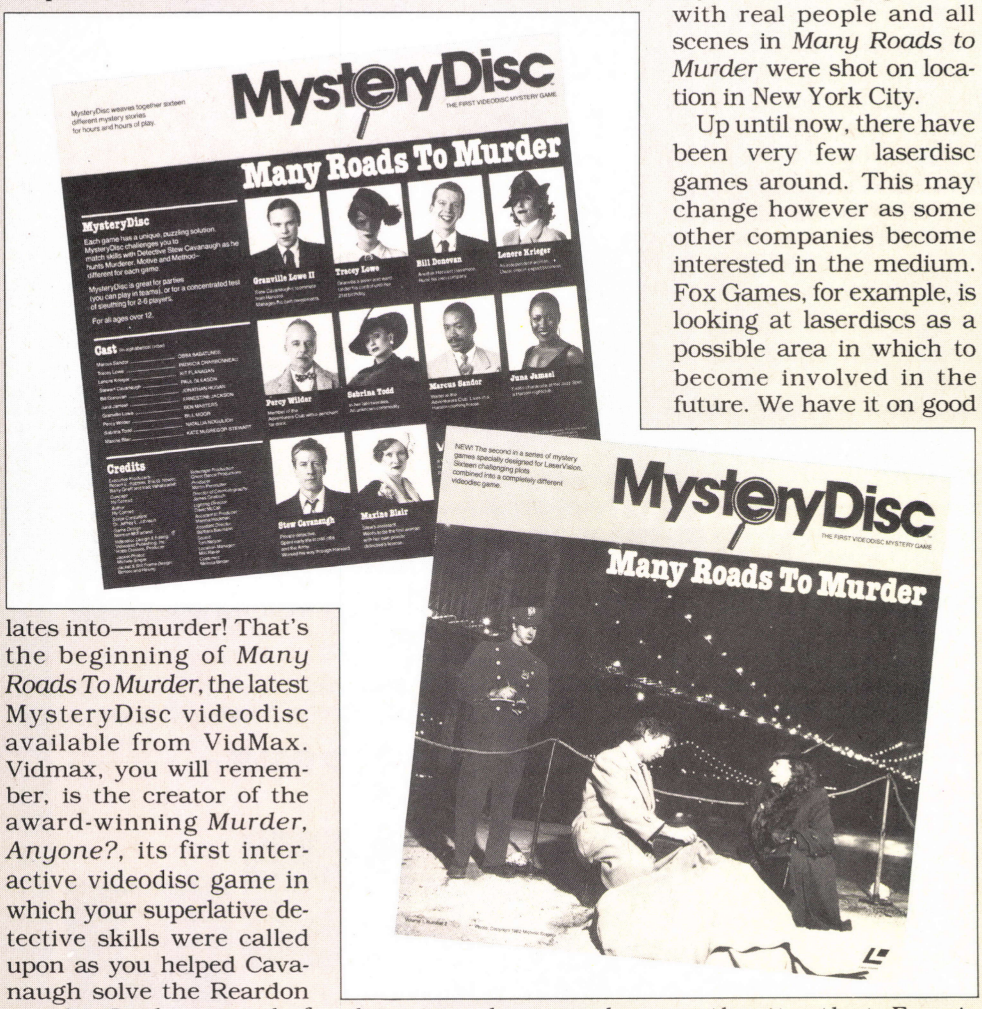
ELECTRONIC FUN WITH COMPUTERS & GAMES

C.F.G. Times

VOLUME TWO, NUMBER ONE NOVEMBER, 1983

VIDMAX'S LATEST MURDER BY DISC

November, 1938. An old college buddy of Stew Cavanaugh's walks into his private eye offices asking for help and what began as a simple matter soon escalates into—murder! That's the beginning of *Many Roads To Murder*, the latest MysteryDisc videodisc available from VidMax. Vidmax, you will remember, is the creator of the award-winning *Murder, Anyone?*, its first interactive videodisc game in which your superlative detective skills were called upon as you helped Cavanaugh solve the Reardon murder. In this second of the series, Stew needs your help once again. As in the first game, there are 16 different plot lines and solutions for you to investigate. The case can begin either as a disappearance or robbery, depending on your first choice. Your second choice determines the next plot twist and so on and so forth. Everything from Harlem jazz clubs to smuggling to espionage is included in this game and you may discover one of three corpses as you walk through pre-WWII Manhattan. One of the advantages of games on disc is the reality factor. Instead of characters being represented by chunky colored sprites that move jerkily (when they move at all) across the screen, videodisc murder mysteries are populated with real people and all scenes in *Many Roads to Murder* were shot on location in New York City.



Up until now, there have been very few laserdisc games around. This may change however as some other companies become interested in the medium. Fox Games, for example, is looking at laserdiscs as a possible area in which to become involved in the future. We have it on good authority that Fox is negotiating with RCA to produce laserdisc games together. No titles are available yet.

Fire, Theft, Syntax Error Coverage

Betty Grable insured her legs for one million dollars and they weren't even something that she was afraid would be stolen in the night. Your computer, on the other hand, is something that could be taken from your house while you're on vacation and, up until now, there was no way to insure it against theft. Now, there's Safeware, a new line of insurance developed exclusively for micro-computer owners. Safeware provides for full replacement coverage (after a $50 deductible). This includes all hardware, software and media. Your system is protected against theft, fire, accidental damage and even damage that might be sustained during auto accidents while the computer is in your car. For more information, contact Safeware by calling (800) 848-3469.

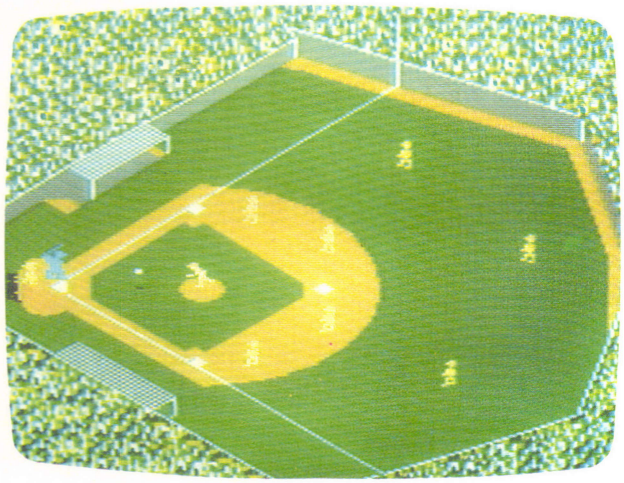
QUOTE OF THE MONTH

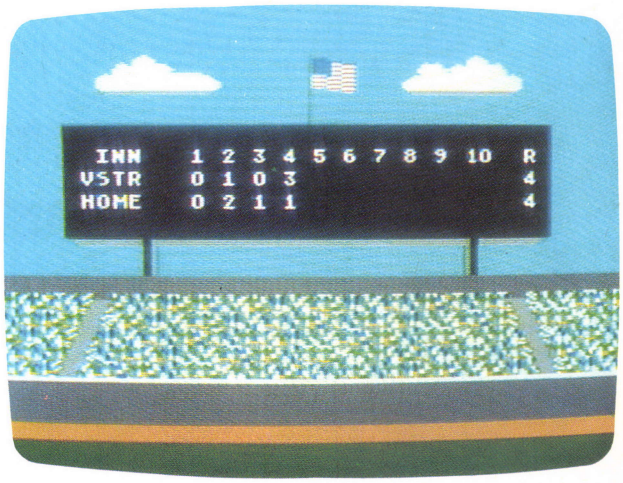
"Risk-taking produces a pleasurable arousal, followed by a feeling of release. . . . Getting high on video games and jogging has become an extraordinary American phenomenon."

Dr. Joel Eikes, professor emeritus of psychology, Johns Hopkins University.

Star League™ Baseball.

It Makes Dreams Come True On The Atari® 400/800/1200XL™ And Commodore 64.™





If you've ever dreamed of becoming a major leaguer, your dream has just come true. Introducing STAR LEAGUE™ BASEBALL by GAMESTAR. For the Atari® Home Computers and Commodore 64.™

STAR LEAGUE™ BASEBALL brings home all the realistic action *and* strategy of our national pastime. For starters, it offers the most lifelike animation ever seen in a sports game, from the wind-up and delivery of the pitcher to the arc (and shadow) of a fly ball!

STAR LEAGUE™ BASEBALL lets you *choose* your starting team and pitcher. You can even bring in a "knuckleball" throwing reliever when your starter "tires!"

And, of course, STAR LEAGUE™ BASEBALL lets you play *solitaire* against a hard-hitting computer team or a human opponent. All to the exciting sounds of real baseball, from the crack of the bat to the cheer of the crowd!

Ask for STAR LEAGUE™ BASEBALL by GAMESTAR at your nearest Atari® or Commodore dealer today and make *your* major league dream come true. Or write: GAMESTAR INC., 1302 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 (805) 963-3487 for our *free* catalog and Tips for Stars #2 (for STARBOWL™ FOOTBALL owners).

GAMESTAR™

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TAKE ME IN TO THE BALL GAME

As far as cheering crowds and action went, it was just like any other game Steve Garvey might have played with the Padres except for one thing—none of the high-res fans in Sega's *Champion Baseball* asked for his autograph when Garvey tackled the computerized version of the game that made him famous. According to Sega, Garvey was enthusiastic over the incredible realism of *Champion Baseball*. "Some of these players move like real ones I know," quipped Steve. What's the law covering pine tar use on the joystick bat handle, we wonder.

Steve Garvey plays ball . . . for a change.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Whoops! We told an untruth. On page 12 of our September issue, we showed a new product called The Obelisk. That much was true. What wasn't true, was the price. We listed it as $49.95. It isn't. It's $89.95. Sorry.

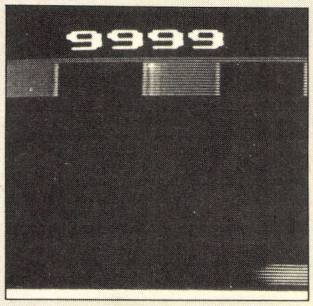
I'm afraid we made another small mistake. On page 90 in the June Buyer's Guide, we mixed up the information about two companies that make games for the Commodore computers. The information that follows Telesys belongs, by rights, with Spinnaker and the information that follows Spinnaker should, instead, follow Telesys. We apologize for any confusion this might have caused.

Don Devendorf revs his engine.

Busman's Holiday for Race Ace

Relaxation means different things to different people. Some like to hang upside down in gravity inversion boots. Some like to sleep during the day in coffins on beds of their native soil. Others like to relax on a bed of nails. But how does someone who drives for a living spend his free time? Surely not driving. Wrong. Don Devendorf, an IMSA champion race car driver likes to drive. But he doesn't hop into a car. No. He turns on the old VCS and plugs in his trusty *Enduro* cartridge. And, best of all, no pit stops.

MONTHLY CONTEST



First of all, we want to congratulate everyone who scored 9,999 in the August Contest—*Frogger* for the VCS. As you know, in the event of a huge tie, a random drawing determines the winner. Now that we've explained that, we can tell you who the winner is... Andrew Clark from Wauconda, Illinois. Good work, Andrew. You'll be receiving your cartridge in the mail soon.

The contest for November is *Pepper II* for ColecoVision. As in the past, we ask you to send in a clear picture of your highest score. On the back of the picture or on a piece of paper attached to the photograph, please print your name, address, phone number, the score you achieved and the cartridge you wish to receive. All entries must be postmarked no later than November 15 in order to be eligible to win.

Have you got an item for the EFG Times? *News events, game tips, photos and other information are gladly accepted. Send material to:* EF, *350 E. 81st St., New York, New York 10028.*

readers tips

SMURF RESCUE

On game number four, move as fast as you can between screens one and two. If you do this successfully in under one minute, you'll get a score of 919,500 points and the display of Smurfs remaining will sprout like a field of grass gone berserk.

John Lessich
Twinsburg, OH

JOUST

On the egg waves, always start up top on the right hand side and go straight across, then do the same for the middle and bottom in that order. You should be able to get all of them before they get riders.

Gary Helm
Easton, PA

DEFENDER

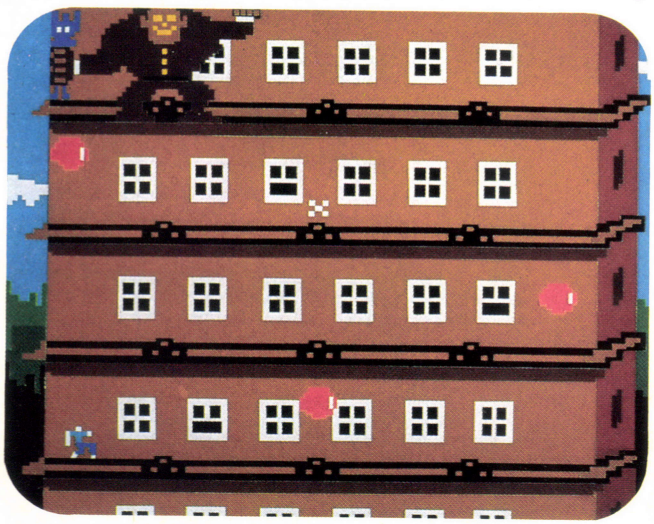
Shoot *all the time*! When you shoot, you disappear—when you disappear, they can't get you. The best bet is to get one of those joystick attachments that gives you continuous fire. Yes indeedy!

Brett Hollembeck
Rockford, IL

RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

Want to obtain the Staff of Power right at the beginning of the game, instead of at the end? Just go up instead of down. Travel until the invisible barrier stops you; you should then see an oasis. Go take a drink, and when you do you'll automatically receive the Staff of Power.

Richard Read
Laurel, MS



BEAUTY & THE BEAST

Here's how to get the highest possible score: Simply climb the first building over and over again. When you get to the top of the first building, jump off. That way, it never gets harder, the rocks never split, and it doesn't get any faster.

Chris McLaughlin
New Milford, NJ

LOOPING

When you enter the pipe screen, try to stay in there as long as possible to gain extra points.

Charles Trimblett
Jersey City, NJ

TUTANKHAM

When the game starts, go straight to the bottom of the hallway you're in and keep shooting to the right. When there aren't as many serpents and other creatures in the way, work yourself over to a key or treasure.

David Wenner
Toronto, ON

MUNCHMAN

You can start at any level with any number of men if you simply turn on the machine, press any key, then press "2" for *Munchman*. When the title screen appears, press shift "8," shift "3," shift "8." It will then ask you three questions (remember that "0" is really "1").

Adam Pasztory
New York, NY

TRON

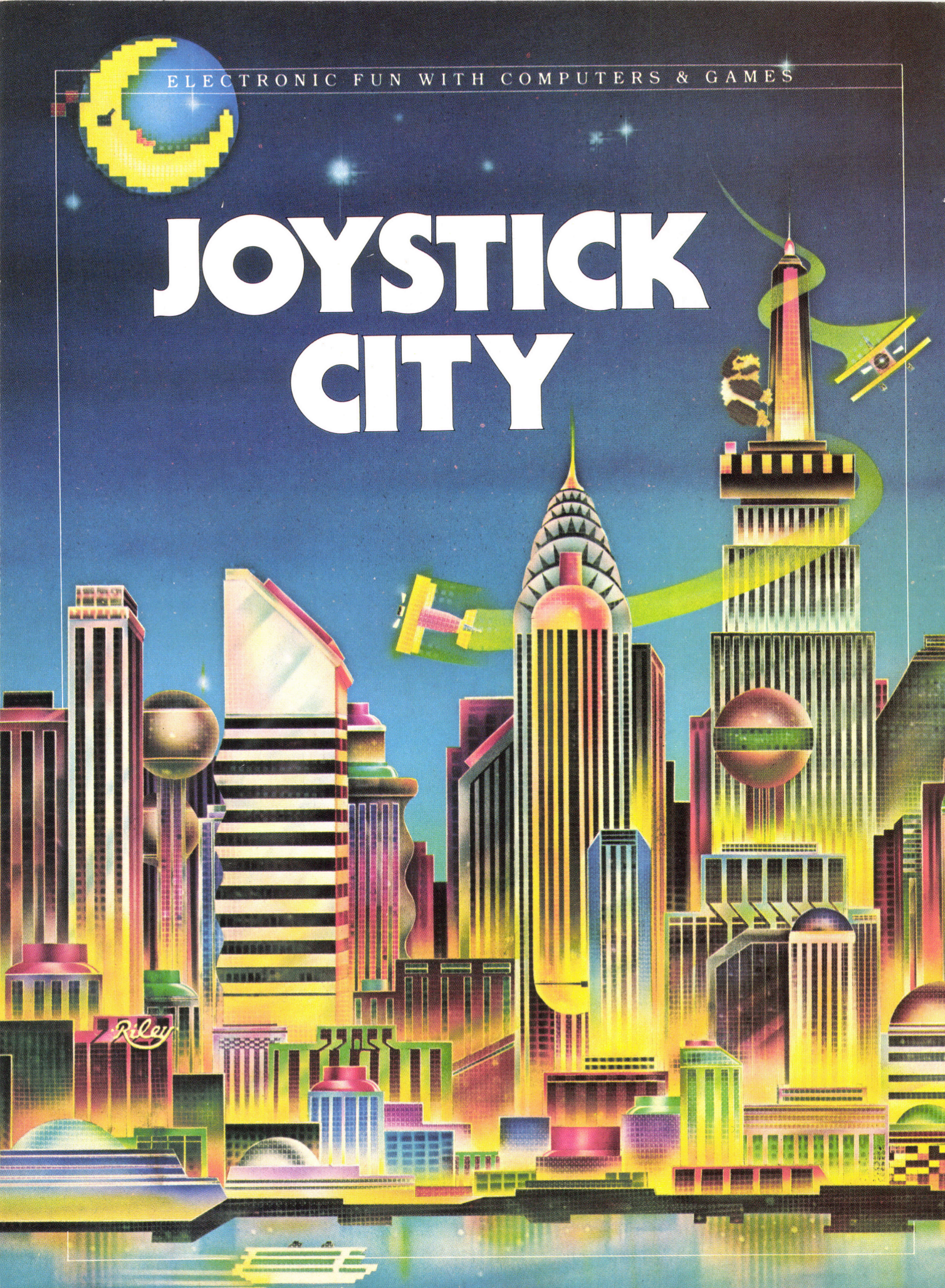
To improve your score on the arcade game, memorize the order the screens come in, and what each contains. If you know what order they're coming in and how to do each of them, you'll be ready and get much higher scores (I racked up 2,500,000 by memorization.)

Richard Budman
Toronto, Ontario

Do you have a tip for your favorite game? If it's good, we'll print it in Reader's Tips. *Send tips to:* Electronic Fun, *250 E. 81st St., New York, NY 10028.*

ELECTRONIC FUN WITH COMPUTERS & GAMES

JOYSTICK CITY



What to see, what to play, what to buy

If you lined all the joysticks up side by side, you'd end up with something that resembles a skyline. This would be a fine exercise to promote manual dexterity but it wouldn't get you any closer to figuring out which joystick is best. So we asked video game authority Ken Uston to evaluate the joysticks for you.

By Ken Uston

Right now my living room looks like the shipping/receiving department of a disorganized electronics firm. Lying around everywhere are carton boxes, game controllers of all sizes and shapes, press releases, notes, advertising copy, suction cups and joystick adapters. For the past several weeks, I've spent dozens of hours playing the same video games over and over, with different controllers, in search of the ultimate joystick.

Joysticks, I've found, are like golf clubs and news anchormen; that is, our personal preference for them is often totally subjective. Some work better for different types of games. A sensitive control may be terrific for racking up scores in *Defender*-type shoot-em-ups, but be a detriment while *Pac-Man*ning. Also, there are different styles of play and this has an enormous impact on which controller is most suitable.

This article covers controllers that are used with the Atari VCS, all of which are also compatible with the Sears Video Arcade (which is essentially a VCS), the Atari computers (400, 800 and 1200XL), the VIC-20 and the Commodore 64. "Y-adapters" are on the market that are attachable to these controllers, allowing them to be used with ColecoVision and the TI 99/4A.

(Newport Controls, Bishop CA, sells adapters for both systems at a list price of $9.95.)

I've evaluated each controller from two standpoints using the time-honored school grading system: A (Excellent), B (Good), C (Fair) and D (Poor). I've considered two categories.

OPERATION—How well does the controller operate generally? How easy is it to maneuver the object on the screen and to shoot accurately?

STURDINESS—Is the controller durable? Is it likely to last a long time or does it appear to be subject to wear and tear from prolonged use?

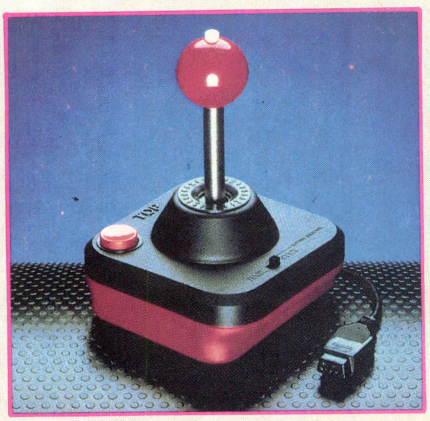
I played different types of games with each controller. The major maze test was maneuvering through the Atari VCS *Pac-Man*, a tough challenge to controllers since the game programming makes accurate control difficult. *River Raid* and *Megamania* were used to test rapid firing capability. *Seaquest* evaluated diagonal movement and the ability to change direction rapidly. To assess vertical movement, I plugged in *Planet Patrol*. Other games were selected when it appeared the controller might have advantages or shortcomings in specific areas. These included *Defender*, *Missile Command*, *Spider Fighter* and dozens of others.

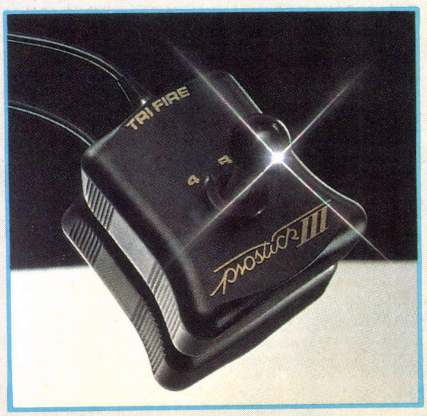
STRICTLY HANDHELD

Four controllers were reviewed which were designed specifically for handheld use: the Zircon series, Prostick, Enjoystick and the Amiga Power-Stik.

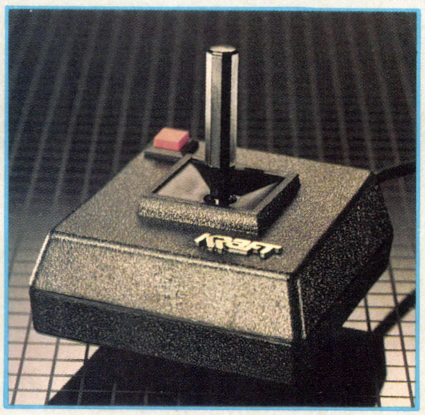
The Zircon Series: B, B+, A

Zircon produces three controllers, Video Command, Video Command Plus and Z-Stick, all of the same basic design. They get my vote as the best available handheld controllers. They are easy to hold, and the joystick responds to subtle nudges by the player, which permits extreme accuracy in controlling the object on the screen. Zircons cannot be placed on a flat surface and are not designed for arcade-type play.





Ode to joysticks (from bottom left on up to top right): The hefty Triga Command from Electra Concepts; Newport Control's Prostick III; the new popularly-priced Boss joystick from Wico; The Wico Red Ball Controller; Starfighter from Suncom; Kraft's regular joystick with only one fire button; The Advantage from R. Dobson; GIM Electronics' Fire Command Console; The Z-Stick from Zircon—with a half-speed function that can really help you become an outstanding video athlete with Activision's DECATHLON—and The Powergrip from Wico.



While the Video Command worked fine, I preferred the Plus. Although its chrome ball doesn't rotate, it allows the player to slide his hand around it, giving a more flexible feeling while playing.

The Z-Stick has two helpful features, one of which is unique:

•It has a rapid fire switch at the base. Rapidfire helps only in games which do not have continuous firing already programmed in. The advantages of rapidfire are best displayed in Atari's *Defender*; the player is virtually immune to destruction because the spaceship becomes invisible (and thus impervious to enemy fire) while the player is firing.

•The Z-Stick has a "half speed" feature, an option which I've never seen on any other controller. When a second button on the shaft is depressed, the object on the screen moves slower than normal. Half speed is especially helpful in games like *Missile Command* and *Seaquest*, where slower movement often allows the player to rack up more points.

Ironically, what no doubt will become the most-discussed feature of half speed was not intended by the Zircon designers. Activision's new game, *Decathon*, requires the player to activate the athlete on the screen by moving the joystick back and forth as fast as possible. This is physically exhausting, particularly in the 1500 meter run which lasts for over three minutes.

The Z-Stick, when put at half speed, makes the runner go faster with less movement of the joystick. This is because the half speed option automatically activates the joystick contact over and over again. I played *Decathlon* without half speed and scored about 6,300 points. On the very next game, using half speed, my score soared to over 9,000.

The Zircon series is particularly useful in games requiring subtle control. I found them to be unexcelled in moving objects vertically—in fact, I wouldn't play *Planet Patrol* without a Z-Stick.

A word of warning—the original Video Command, marketed several years ago, has no fire button. The player pushes the top plunger downward to activate the firing function. The manufacturer tells me that there shouldn't be any more of these on the market, but to be safe, check to make sure the Video Command you get has a red firing button.

Prostick: C

The Prostick controllers, from Newport Controls, are molded to facilitate handheld operation. Prostick II has two firing buttons, for either right- or left-handed players. Around the base of the joystick is a "gateplate" which allows the player to select either 4-way (horizontal and vertical) or 8-way (including diagonals) operation.

Prostick III has a firing bar, instead of buttons, which allows either right- or left-handed play with the Atari VCS. A Y-adapter is built into the Prostick cord for use with ColecoVision.

Both joysticks are rigid—that is, they don't "give" when moved from the center position. Instead of a soft, cushy feeling, the stick stops suddenly, with a hard metallic thud. The Prostick is not nearly as responsive as many other controllers. A subtle touch is impossible, because the joystick must be moved too far before the object on the screen responds.

I found the Prostick controllers too large for comfortable use. When you use them, you'll become aware

Illustration: Frank Riley

of a little-used muscle in the pad of your hand just below the little finger; it gets really sore.

Prosticks are durably constructed; in fact, they appear virtually indestructible. This no doubt is why the manufacturer offers a generous five year warranty.

Enjoystick: C-

I experimented with a prototype Enjoystick from TG Products that had a stationary button on the right side. The actual model can be converted for use by left-handers by rotating the top of the unit, positioning the button on the left side.

The Enjoystick is a six-sided plastic controller with a short, thin joystick. The controller fits nicely in the palm of the hand for armchair players. The unit is awkward, at best, for arcade-type play.

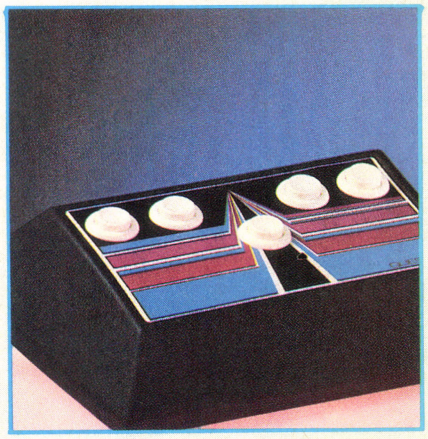
Although the controller is light and easy to hold, the lightweight plastic doesn't seem to be particularly durable. The joystick is one of the tiniest I've ever seen. It will turn off players who prefer larger controls. The unresponsive joystick has too much "play." The insensitive action makes subtle control over screen objects impossible.

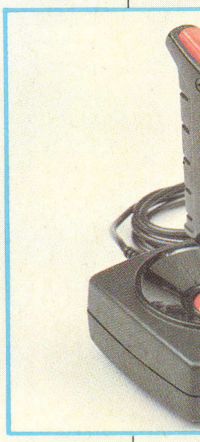
The Power-Stick: B+

For those who really object to big, 18-wheeler type joysticks, and find them so unwieldy that they interfere with the astronomical scores you know you are capable of, there's the Power-Stik from Amiga. This tiny little joystick can be held very comfortable in the palm of one hand. The handle is also extremely small and the firing buttons stick out like Clark Gable's ears from the top of the base. I found it to be an excellent joystick which afforded me great precision in maze games—however, where speed in shooting was a factor, it was a little bit erratic. It also worked very well with Activision's *Decathlon* game.

The Joyboard: B+

This one should really be assigned its own category—footheld—as it is not a conventional controller by any means. The Joyboard is about the size of a Welcome mat and you stand on it and rock back and forth and forward and backward in order to control your guy. It comes with its own game—*Mogul Maniac*—and Amiga says there are several more games in the works including a surfing game (*Surf's Up*), a shoot-em-up game (*S.A.C. Alert*) and something called *Off Your Rocker.* Although the Joyboard has no firing buttons of its own (and a good thing too, or you'd have to take off your shoes and use your toes to operate them), there is an outlet into which you can plug a joystick to use in conjunction with it. You can also use the Joyboard with any of the standard VCS games you have already mastered and this will add a new element of challenge to the same old plot. Mainly, though, this is a novelty item.





MOSTLY HANDHELD

Some controllers are designed primarily, but not exclusively, for handheld play. These include the Kraft and Suncom series, the conventional Atari VCS controller, and an intriguing device called the Joy-Sensor.

Kraft: B-

The three Kraft controllers are virtually identical. One, called the Switchitter has a second button on the right side of the base for southpaws.

The Kraft is the best controller in the "mostly handheld" category. The joystick is responsive and permits accurate, subtle control

over screen objects. You are not as likely to get "Atari thumb," caused by holding the base with the firing hand. This is because the stick can be moved easily, without creating pressure on the base, eliminating the need for a heavy-handed grip. If you prefer big, bulky joysticks, you won't like the Kraft stick, which is short and thin.

It is possible to set the Kraft on a flat surface and use it arcade style, although none of the models have rubber pads to prevent slipping. If you're set on arcade-type operation, however, you'd be better off with several of the controllers covered in the following section.

Suncom Slik Stik: C-

The Slik Stik is a small inexpensive controller designed primarily for handheld use. The joystick is short (under two inches) and has a little red ball on top. Slik Stik is not nearly as responsive as the Kraft controller, but slightly more responsive than the Atari.

Slik Stik appears durably constructed, but the manufacturer apparently has had many problems, since two higher-priced models were modified to eliminate joystick breakage.

Suncom Star Fighter: C-

This device is advertised as "the ultimate joystick." Although I couldn't wait to get it out of the box, I was disappointed to find that the Star Fighter is basically a Slik Stik, with a thicker joystick and no red ball. A company spokesman told me that Star Fighter has more durable internal components and that the shape of the joystick limits the "throw" of the stick, thereby reducing breakage. While not visually apparent, Star Fighter no doubt is better made than the Slik Stik; it has a two year warranty (versus 90 days for Slik Stick).

Suncom TAC-2: C+

The top-of-the-line of the Suncom series, the TAC-2, has a number of improvements: a larger base, a volcanic-shaped protective cone surrounding the joystick (to prevent damage) and right-handed fire buttons, a larger ball at the end of the joystick and rubber non-skid pads on the bottom.

The ads on the box state that the TAC-2 was "tested to three million moves without failure." The test lab estimates that this equates to eight years of play for the average gamer (hence the "A" in durability on the rating table).

Atari Joystick: D

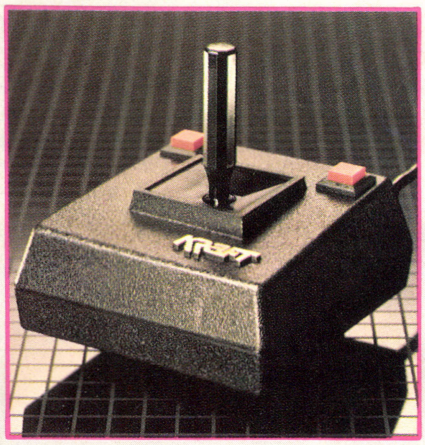
I'm sure that you've all used the conventional Atari joystick supplied with the Atari VCS. The controller is stiff, has caused numerous cases of Atari thumb, and is subject to breakage. Just about every other controller is preferable to the standard "workhorse" of the industry—which makes sense when you think about it. Since they all cost at least as much, why else would other controllers have been manufactured in the first place?

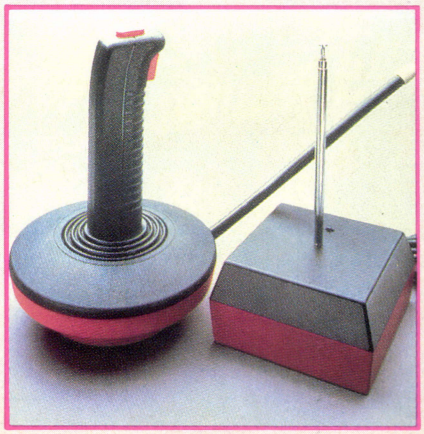
Suncom Joy-Sensor: D

Suncom has come up with an ingenious device, called the Joy-Sensor. The player rubs a disk at the base of this unique unit (visualize a touch-sensitive Intellivision disk) and the screen object moves. The firing pad on top is also touch sensitive.

The gamer can achieve exceedingly rapid movement with the disk but for some games the controls are too responsive for

Continued on 92





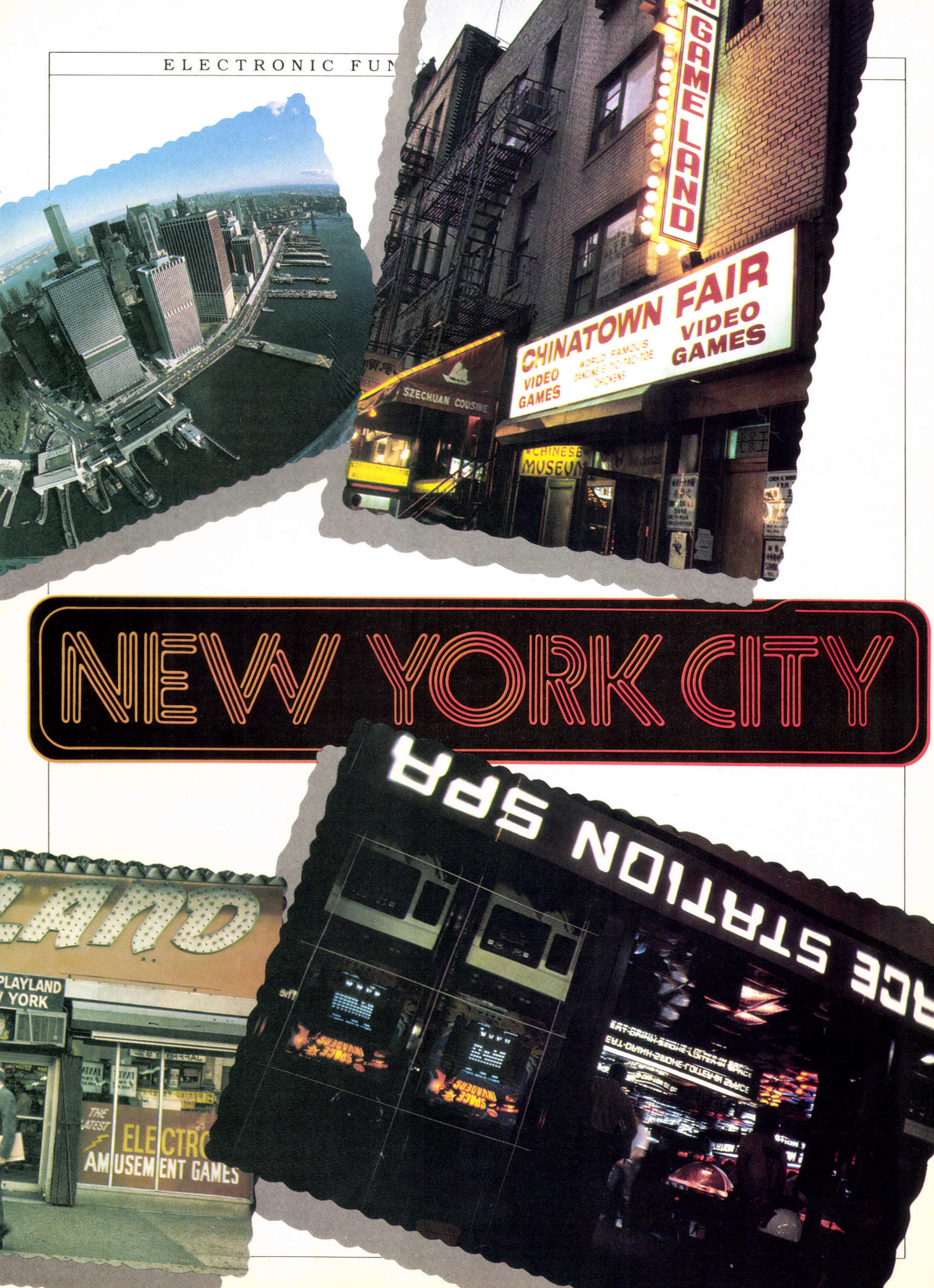
The latest controllers come in all shapes and sizes, catering to all tastes and the requirements of different games. Here are more controllers than you can shake a joystick at (from top left to bottom right): The PointMaster Pro from Discwasher; Suncom's TAC-2; Threeway controller from Wico; Zircon's Video Command; Questar's controller puts the power in buttons; Discwasher's PointMaster; The Kraft Switchitter with two fire buttons for left- and right-handed players; TG Product's Enjoystick; The Joy Sensor from Suncom and Championship Electronics Remote Control Superchamp.

THE UNKNOWN ARCADER

Arcades of

New York! The Big Apple! The Melting Pot! The City of the Broad Shoulders! No, wait! That's Chicago. Naked City, that's New York, and a quick tour of the Times Square area will tell you why. It was to Times Square and several other colorful Manhattan locales that the Unknown Arcader took himself in his continuing quest for the perfect arcade. As the tots played London Bridge is Falling Down on the Sidewalks of New York, UA played Xevious *and* Star Wars *in places as far removed from the sidewalks as several storeys below them. Did he find the ultimate arcade? The saga continues...*

From the Empire State Building to the World Trade Center and beyond, New York is a gamer's adventureland. Some of the arcades UA visited on his Manhattan meander include Chinatown Fair, Space Station, Playland, and Station Break.



NEW YORK CITY

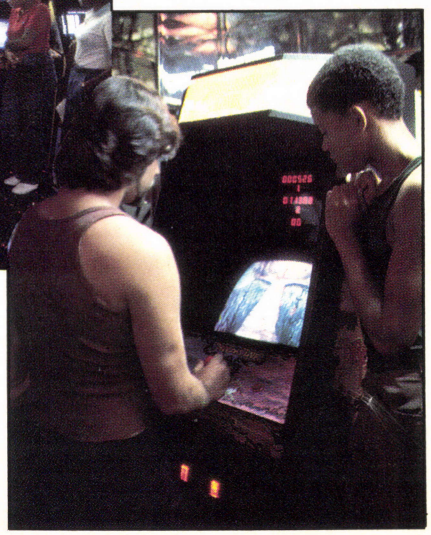
No matter what your pleasure is, you can satisfy it in the Big Apple—at any hour of the day or night. Suppose your idea of a good time is to ride a llama down Broadway with a welder's torch in one hand and a plate of pickled squid in the other while helicopters play "Rose of Washington Square." NO PROBLEM! Or suppose you just get an urge to play *Gorf* at four in the morning. Easy. This is the town where dreams come true—or die hard—and where an aimless video junkie can suddenly find himself writing for a high-class electronics magazine. Yes, I came home to New York, the arcades of my salad years before I hit the big time.

It's not that the New York arcades are lousy. Au contraire! They're great. There just aren't that many of them—due largely to laws dating back to Prohibition regarding zoning—and the fandango involved in getting an arcade license. In New York, only muggers don't need permits.

My first stop was off the beaten track but definitely worth the trip. Chinatown Fair, a bustling arcade at 8 Mott Street in Chinatown is the home of the famous "Tic-Tac-Toe Chicken." Actually, the legendary "Dancing Chicken" of Chinatown Fair was famous first, but recent appearances by "T-T-T Chicken" on *Real People* and *That's Incredible* have eclipsed the "Dancing Chicken's" stardom. Side by side with the barnyard attractions are about 90 videos, 10 Draw Pokers, a *Chexx* machine and a few novelties like a plastic "Fun Chicken" which lays plastic eggs.

It's the original DRAGON'S LAIR—Chinatown Fair on Mott Street. Among the dark mysteries of the orient are the Tic-Tac-Toe Chicken, not to be confused with the Dancing Chicken.

While the talented poultry keeps the tourists coming, games like *Food Fight*, *Mr. Do!*, *Galaga* and *Black Widow* pull in the serious players from the neighborhood and from nearby Little Italy and Wall Street. But the real drollery at



Space Station's decor is early Studio 54. With mirrored ceilings, lighted floors and upside down SPACE INVADERS machines, the effect is a little disorienting.

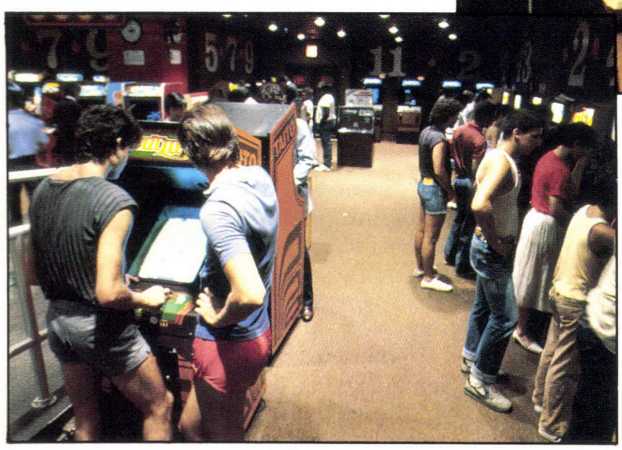
Chinatown Fair (chickens notwithstanding) is upstairs. Check out the Museum of China's Contributions to the World. It features an undulating dragon, caterwaulling opera stars, a China Quiz and an assortment of more staid statuary and other breakables.

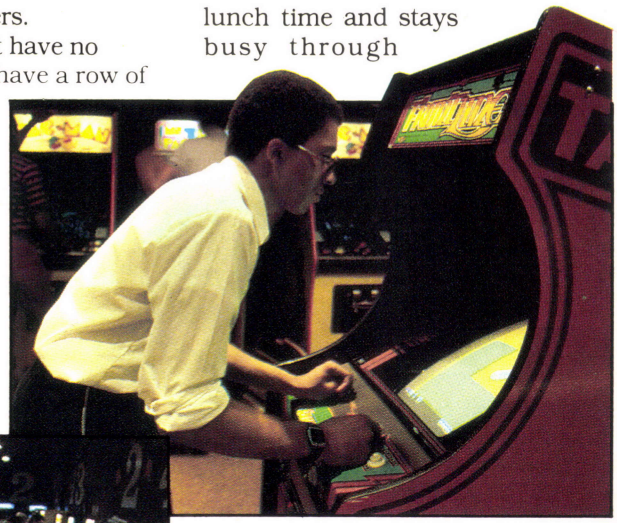
One might guess that this 38-year-old establishment would be run by some dotty old Mandarin, exiled during the revolution for too much whimsy, but no! The mack who runs this joint is a 26-year-old nightclub singer, who describes himself as "a nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn." In fact, he's a redheaded heartbreaker named Charles Fletcher, who, when he's not crooning "Lady of Spain" on the supperclub circuit, is dressing as a clown and giving balloons to the little tykes in the arcade.

"When I started out in show business," he says, "the chickens were doing a lot better than I was." Ka-chunk kunk!

Though Charles doesn't have all the new machines, the ones he's got are in good shape. When I was there, he was waiting to get *Dragon's Lair*—last in line after the big boys uptown, although a natural beast for the Chinese Museum. Charles plays the games himself to decide what to order. He keeps the place open till 3 AM on weekends, but has been known to stretch closing time when somebody's on a roll. "One guy," he remembers, "stayed here for 13 hours playing the same quarter on *Defender*." A glance at the high scores bespeaks some formidable talent: *Tempest*—939,535; *Centipede*—492,276. "Some of the neighborhood kids are incredible," he adds and flashes his perfect Brooklyn-born choppers.

Space Station might have no chickens, but it does have a row of *Space Invaders* machines hanging upside down in the window. It's one of the new breed of arcades with lights under the floor, a mirrored ceiling and a high-tech atmosphere—at least until the E-train rumbles by with its ancient clatter and piercing squeal. You see, Space Station is underground, in Penn Station at 34th Street and Seventh Avenue. It's only been open for a year.





Station Break is the arcade of the blasting commuter. Here suburbanites find a new way to unwind after a hard day in the concrete canyons.

The first thing I noticed inside was the crowd gathered around *Dragon's Lair*, a common enough occurrence. Then I saw a bigger cluster of people. Another *Dragon's lair*? A mugging? No, this spectacle was a scrawny kid in a white jersey who had just broken 19 million on *Star Wars* with no end in sight. At the end of each sequence he would stretch his legs and crack his knuckles. It was a rhythm. It was a trance. "Give the kid space," I thought, but said nothing. The crowd didn't seem to faze him. This was the big leagues.

Space Station gets hopping around 7:30 AM when the commuter crowd pulls in. It slows down late in the morning, but picks up at lunch time and stays busy through rush hour. At those times, there's enough gray flannel around to drape a battleship. During school hours, no one under 16 is admitted. The joint (like many New York arcades) is patrolled by undercover cops. The big flatfoot here was a dead giveaway in his Police Academy tee-shirt.

The newest machines were also the most popular: *Champion*

Photos: Andrea Brizzi

Baseball, Crystal Castles, Star Wars, the *Lair*, with *Pole Position* and *Ms. Pac* holding their own. *Centipede* showed a very impressive 999,999.

Bearded manager Nick Lepore runs the station like a real space pirate. He swaggers around, collaring changemakers twice his size—a benevolent despot. One of the changemakers, a wrestling enthusiast, likes to bring in his tag team to mingle with the briefcase set (Man Mountain Dean vs. the C.P.A.).

Machines accept quarters and tokens but Nick only gives tokens for special promotions—like, for railroad ticket stubs, for Coke fun caps and for good report cards. (No changing those F's to A's by drawing an extra leg on them. That trick's as old as wax lips, and you can't put anything over on a New Yorker.)

The *Star Wars* kid was still banging away when I left, the Death Star long gone. Kibby was his name and intergalactic warfare his game. I left him in the adoring glow of his public, recalling the days when my nimble digits could inspire the throngs along the Great White Way—before I went legit.

I hunched down the corridors of Penn Station thinking that Thomas Wolfe was right—you can't go home again—when I stumbled upon Station Break, one of my old haunts. The crowd was thick as flies in front of *Dragon's Lair*. I squeezed past. The old hangout looked the same—only the crowd seemed younger.

Station Break has 90 machines on two levels. The machines are more spread out than at Space Station and it's not as dark. Both places are amazingly clean for something found in the bowels of the city and both offer roughly the same free-game promotions. (The staff at Station Break is quick to point out that they did it first.)

There are cards posted on some machines showing high scores for the week. Some daily high scores were *Tron*—195,347; *Eyes*—364,140; *Gyruss*—89,750.

Howard, Susan and Regina, the changemakers, were all so skinny I figured it was a prerequisite for working there. They have no problem squeezing around the *Dragon's Lair* crowds. They're all marking time on the way to careers, Susan having just finished college in business management and computers. They look like cops in their pint-sized blue uniforms, but, of course, I knew who the real cops were by now.

Intense concentration is etched into the features of an arcader in Playland in Times Square. There are two Playland locations within a few blocks of each other.

Chris, the ambitious manager wears a tie and looks like the Wall Street broker he almost became. He pointed out the popular machines: *Star Wars, Centipede*—no surprises. There were a couple of unusual finds like *Sweet Licks* and Taito's *Grand Champion.* Most of the driving games were grouped

together. Chris has entertained his share of aces. He had to buy off a *Q*Bert* whiz with a gift book so he could close up one night. Hours are 7 AM to 1 AM, Monday through Saturday and 10 AM to 11 PM on Sunday.

Legend has it that Gerry Cooney plays at Station Break. (I wondered if he brings his report card.) Recently a rock video was filmed there but nobody could remember the name of the artist, an electronic violinist. I doubt she went over too well; it's not a violin type of crowd.

I shuffled across the carpet and fed *Frogger* two bits. I watched him get squished just to be perverse—New York will do that to you. Then I rescued him and delivered him to his sweetheart. Call me a sentimental fool, but I like happy endings. I left the love-happy hoppers and went searching for a happy ending of my own.

Times Square is no place to find love, frogs or happy endings. When the subway conductor announces, "Times Square, watch your step," he means it literally and figuratively.

You can't miss Playland at 1565 Broadway. It's right across from the half-price theatre tickets booth and next door to Burger King. It's open 24 hours and attracts a cross-section of people unknown since the days of Babel. Gray-faced winos play cheek-to-cheek with Broadway stars. There are Dutch tourists and Rastafarians, members of the royal family and just plain kids from Queens. It also has the distinction of being the noisiest arcade in the city. Its narrow, wedge shape makes it effectively a megaphone.

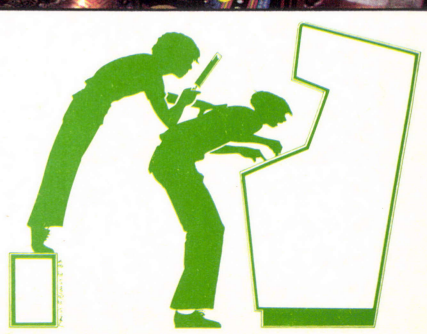
While You Wait is on the most notorious corner in Manhattan. The Fortune Teller is sometimes mistaken for a subway token clerk.

Like everywhere else, *Dragon's Lair* was the main attraction. *Krull* and *Gyruss* were raking it in too. A long forgotten sign read "New Game" on top of a battered *Time Pilot*. The changemakers, a crusty lot, wore orange smocks which made them look like they should be throwing pots in the arts and crafts room. Call one a "potter," though, and he'd probably throw an ash tray at your ear.

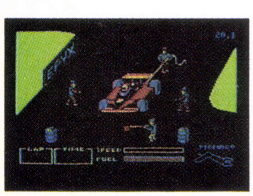
It was here I saw *Bagman* for the first time that day, and the only place I saw Sega's *N-Sub* and an old Midway *Blue Shark*. *Buck Rogers*

Continued on page 96

The chic upper East Side is the site of Electronic Games, one of the few arcades in this residential area. All the machines in this arcade are for sale.



PITSTOP™
WHERE WINNING IS THE PITS.



You'll never make Grand Prix champion just driving in circles.

You've got to stop sometime. The question is when. Right now you're in the lead. But the faster you go, the more gas you consume. And the quicker your tires wear down.

If you do pull into the pits, though, you lose precious seconds. So it's up to you to make sure the pit crew is quick with those tires. And careful with that gas. Otherwise, poof! you're out of the race.

So what'll it be, Mario? Think your tires will hold up for another lap? Or should you play it safe and go get some new ones?

Think it over. Because Pitstop™ is the one and only road race game where winning is more than just driving. It's the pits.

Goggles not included.

One or two players; 6 racecourses, joystick control.

EPYX™ COMPUTER SOFTWARE

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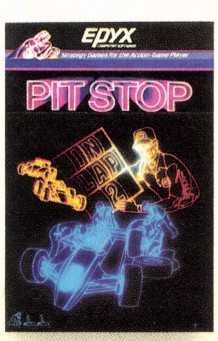


See your retailer for available computer formats.

COMPUTER WORKOUT

SPECTRAVIDEO'S SV-318

32K of RAM and about to set a standard

Complete with a built-in joystick that doubles as a cursor control and an excellent built-in BASIC, the SV-318 is a new low-priced computer to watch. As with many of the new computers, though, software support is still somewhere off in the future. Some developments in Tokyo, however, just might change all that.

By Jules H. Gilder

A few months ago in New York, Spectravideo held a press conference to announce that several major Japanese electronics manufacturers—including Sony, NEC, Panasonic, Hitachi and several others—planned to standardize their microcomputer systems, and that the system chosen as the model was the one incorporated in the Spectravideo SV-318. Although the Japanese have only just begun to tap the American computer market, few industry observers doubt that they will eventually offer high quality, competitively priced computers in huge numbers, just as they did with TV and stereo.

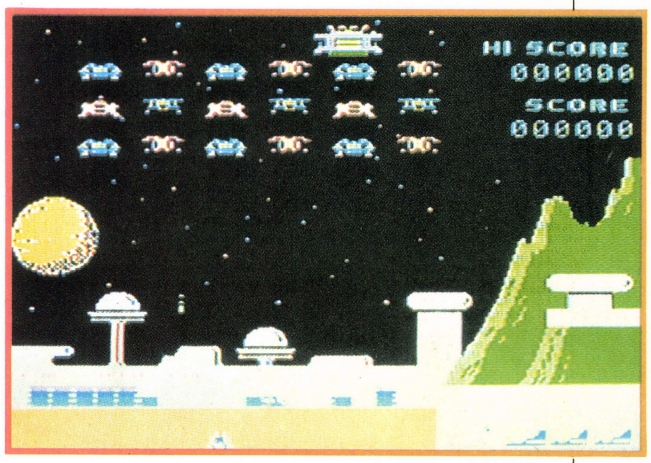
A Big "If"

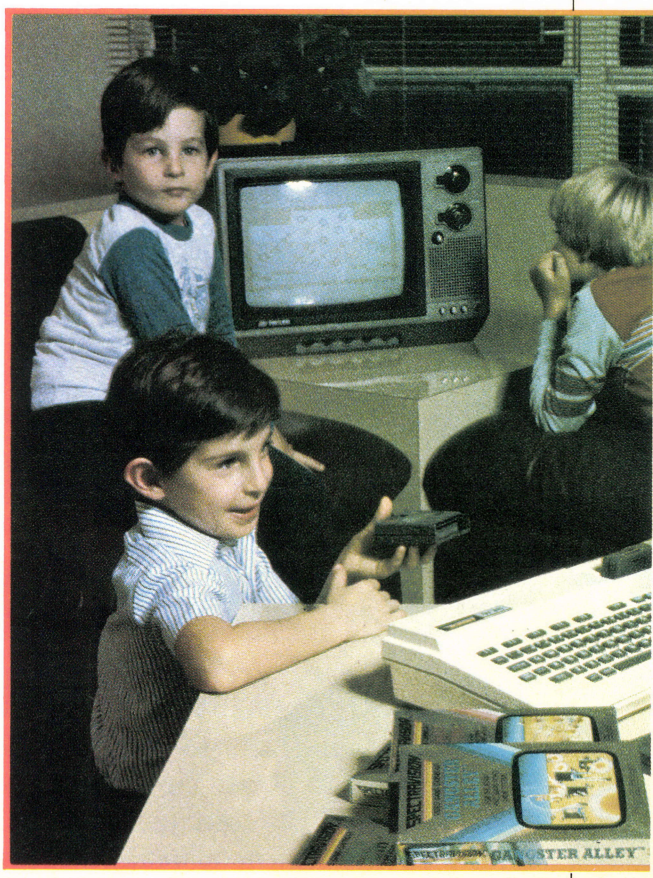
This makes Spectravideo an interesting system to watch, although the unit we reviewed would not be exactly the one to offer compatibility. That would be achieved with an add-on costing about $80, according to Spectravideo. Future units, however, would be compatible with those from Japan, if the Japanese manufacturers follow through with their plans. That's a pretty big "if." The Japanese have strongly resisted standardization in the video field, which is why Sony and Panasonic video recorders, for example, cannot play the same cassettes. In consumer electronics, where technology advances at an alarming pace, nothing is certain. Needless to say, compatibility with a large number of computers would affect any buying decision.

The SV-318 computer uses a Z80 microprocessor, comes with 32K of ROM and 32K of RAM, and the computer sells for $299.95. It features a 71-switch keyboard, if you include the four switches that are used in the built-in joystick. This keyboard makes the full upper and lower case alphabet available along with 52 graphic symbols and 10 user-definable functions. It also has a built-in slot for game cartridges and sockets for connecting external joysticks, keypads or paddles. The ROM contains Microsoft Extended BASIC and literature describing the computer says that the computer can handle as much as 96K of ROM.

Before you get excited about the fact that the computer comes with 32K of RAM, you should know that only 12,815 bytes are available to the user; the rest is used by the system for its own processing and as video display RAM. Advertisements for the SV-318 indicate that the unit is expandable up to 144K of RAM. However, a company spokesman says it can really be expanded to 256K. If that's true, one wonders why they spend thousands of dollars on advertisements that only tout 144K of total RAM capability. When asked about this, a spokesman for Spectravideo indicates that it was a recent change in the computer's capabilities. After careful examination of the computer and the documentation, it seems like there are still a lot of changes going on.

During testing the SV-318 was connected to a total of four different television sets (individually, not all at once). Testing with so many televisions is not generally done, but the video display that was produced on the screen was so bad that additional televisions were used to make sure that the problems were not caused by the television. All sets exhibited some degree of RF noise interference from the computer. The worst victims of this were a fairly new solid-state TV and an older TV that combined both tube and solid-state technology. Best results were achieved on two 10- to 15-year-old color TVs. By fiddling around with the orientation of the wiring, it was possible to get a video display that was quite good. However, the slightest movement of the wiring resulted in interference. This interference manifested itself as a herringbone-like design superimposed on the screen. It also resulted in the inability to lock onto

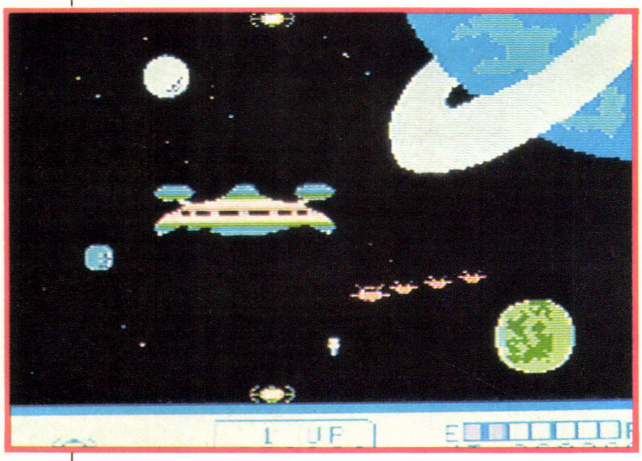


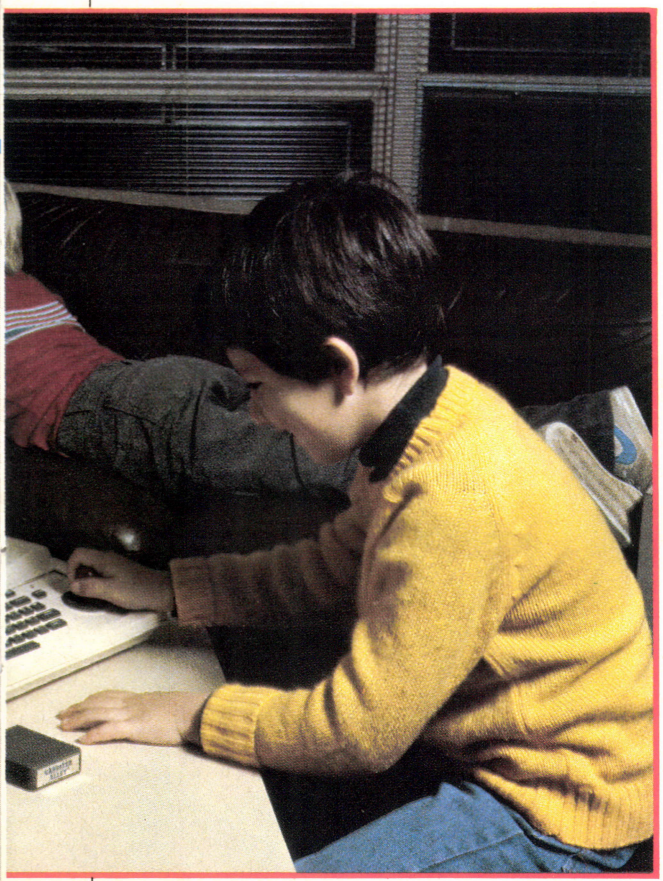


Two of the games currently available for the SV-318—CROSSFORCE (above left) and SPECTRON (above right).

a color display. Sometimes the Spectravideo logo, which appears on powerup, would be displayed in color and then the computer would revert to a black and white mode. At other times, it would stay black and white all the time.

After doing some experimenting with cable placement, I found that if I draped the video cable that goes from the modulator to the antenna switch box around my neck or let someone hold onto the metal case of the modulator, the color picture would remain fairly stable. On mentioning this problem to Spectravideo, they said that they were aware of the RF problem and that on the first couple of thousand units they were going to include a ferrite core that the user would wind the video cable around, to try to reduce the RF. Why or how the first few thousand units would differ from subsequent ones Spectravideo would not say.





On the two tube-based televisions that had better video displays, there was another, more serious problem. Part of the left side of the display was cut off so the first two or three letters on every line were missing. These same televisions worked fine with a wide variety of other computers including the Radio Shack Color Computer, Mattel Aquarius and VZ200. When alerted to this problem, Spectravideo said that a simple adjustment of the horizontal control would take care of this problem. It didn't. Not one to give up easily, I next searched through the BASIC reference manual to find a command that many BASICs contain, to adjust the size of the display window. To my great pleasure, I found just what I was looking for, a command called WIDTH, which determines how many characters will be printed on each line. But joy quickly turned to amazement when I found that the only two numbers that would work with this command were 39 and 40. What a waste of potential capability. At this point I had to abandon using either of these two TVs and return to one of the other ones.

Like so many manufacturers that are coming out with inexpensive home computers, Spectravideo has tried to save money on the keyboard and used one that has small rubber-topped keys instead of conventional typewriter-like keys. And, to no great surprise, Spectravideo has run into the same problems with the keyboard that many others have—inconsistent operation. If these keys are pressed on the top, bottom, sides or corners of the key, they will not work reliably. The user feels some mechanical resistance, or detent, and thinks the keypress has been recorded by the computer, but it hasn't. These keys must be pressed firmly in the center of the key if you wish to achieve reliable operation.

Get Your Clicks

Apparently recognizing the problem from the beginning, Spectravideo built in a slight audible click that is produced through the television's speaker whenever a key is pressed. But you must make sure the volume control on your television is turned up to take advantage of this audio feedback. With the unreliability of data entry from the keyboard, it's difficult to develop speed entering programs or other text from the keyboard. (A subsequent Spectravideo computer, the SV-328, will use a standard typewriter keyboard.)

One of the nice features of the SV-318 is that it comes with a built-in, eight-direction joystick. That's the good news. The bad news is that it works best in only four directions—up, down, left and right. The diagonal positions are not as easy to locate and use because you must position the stick in such a way that two switches are closed at once—an up or a down switch and a right or a left switch. More often than not your first attempt to move in a diagonal line will have you moving in one of the four primary directions. For those of you who prefer it, the knob-like handle of the

Continued on page 96

GAME WORKOUT

Of beasts and butlers

Your ticket to high-res adventure

Who says there's no such thing as dragons? Who says the time of King Arthur, knights and quests for treasures is long gone? Whoever's been telling you that has been leading you down the garden path. Dragons (fire-breathing and sleeping varieties) are high-res and well in computer adventure games. But the Middle Ages are not the only new vista that is yours to explore. You can also travel to the ends of time, rub magic lamps, hobnob with pirates and parrots or put on your trenchcoat, question the suspects and solve the mysterious murder of Mr. Robner, among others.

By Michael Blanchet

As the ex-manager of an arcade, I've made a living off of blasting aliens and I'm the last one to say video games rot your mind. After all, I graduated from the joystick to the typewriter, and even those English teachers who said I'd never amount to anything have to admit that a syndicated newspaper column and monthly articles in *Electronic Fun* are nothing to sneeze at.

But there have been times—as I'm sure there have in the life of any semi-crazed gamer—when I peek out the window and see the sun coming up, and realize that I've just spent the last 12 hours battling a bunch of mutants who have no respect for me or my dexterity with a joystick. It makes a man feel a little worthless, not to mention thumb-sore and mind-numb. What's missing is mental stimulation, the kind of satisfaction you get not only from chess or Scrabble but from poker or basketball as well. So I'm happy to say that I've not only graduated from the joystick to the typewriter, but to the computer keyboard as well—that's your "joystick" for the adventure game.

In comparison to "twitch" games, where the *modus operandi* is all but completely spelled out for you at the outset, adventure games present the player with a goal and virtually no hint or clue on how to proceed. Rarely are joysticks and paddles used. You've got a first-person perspective and type your instructions on the keyboard. What you do and where you go is limited only by

OKAMOTO

games. *Zork* requires concentration and lots of patience.

One reason why the Infocom adventures are so proseworthy is your imagination—and the computer's vocabulary. And in nearly all adventure games your goal is to find some elusive and of times hidden objects.

Adventure games fall into two categories—the text adventure and the graphic adventure. The text adventure is just that—a series of text descriptions the player reads and reacts to as the game progresses. After typing in a question or command, the text changes to give the player either an answer to his query or a rundown of a new scenario he has just entered.

The *Zork* series from Infocom is an example of such a game in its purest—graphicless—form. The prose, which reads like a pulp paperback describes, a journey through different levels of a dungeon. Dropped into the text are an occasional riddle, hint or clue. What makes the *Zork* series (I, II and III) unique is its extensive vocabulary. Each game accepts multi-word commands and questions. The player's ability to qualify a command with extra verbiage, though, doesn't make *Zork* any easier. Like all adventure games, Infocom's unique Interlogic system of programming. This enables the computer to make quantum leaps as the storyline unfolds. Characters in the adventure, for example, can make discoveries that will aid you as you go along, provided you've laid the groundwork for those discoveries. None of this could be accomplished if Infocom used graphics—the pictures just take up too much memory.

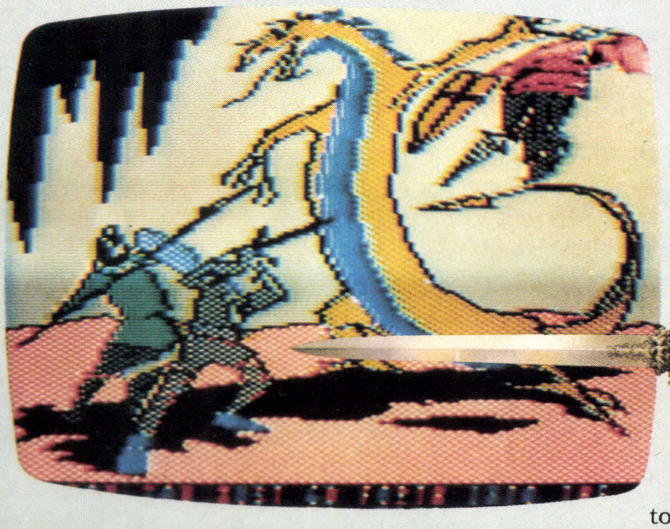
Nowhere is this brought to better use than in mysteries such as *Deadline* and *Witness*. In both games you are a police detective trying to solve a murder. You have twelve hours to do so—most commands advance the clock one minute though some require more time. Unlike other adventure games, where the same command under the same circumstances will lead to the same response, *Deadline* is full of surprises. Suspects will behave differently depending on what evidence is in your possession. In addition, timing is everything—being in the right place at the right time will yield pieces of evidence you never thought existed.

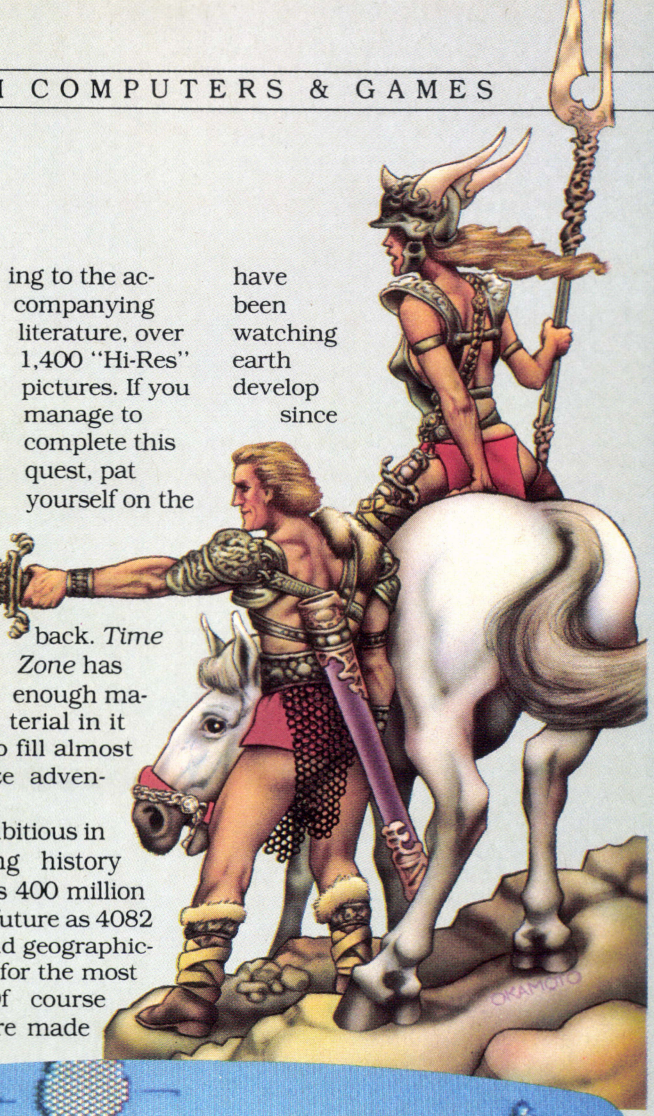
The only way to solve *Deadline* is to save the game at certain critical junctures and then follow the trails that appear the most productive. Run into a dead end and you can go back and try a different tack. The surest way to know that you're at an impasse is when the suspects stop answering your questions (they say things like, "I can't help you there") and the computer refuses to find anything interesting as you search the scene of the crime. All this means you missed some vital clue, probably because you were chasing the wrong suspect.

Infocom games may not have graphics, but they do come with elaborate and witty support material—coroner's reports, telegrams sent prior to the crime, a pack of matches with a mysterious inscription and other clues. One Infocom game, *Suspended*—in which

Top, DARK CRYSTAL, Sierra's Jim Henson translation; below, THE QUEST from Penguin. On the facing page, Sir-Tech's WIZARDRY on top and Sierra's WIZARD AND THE PRINCESS below.

Lead Illustration: Michael Okamoto





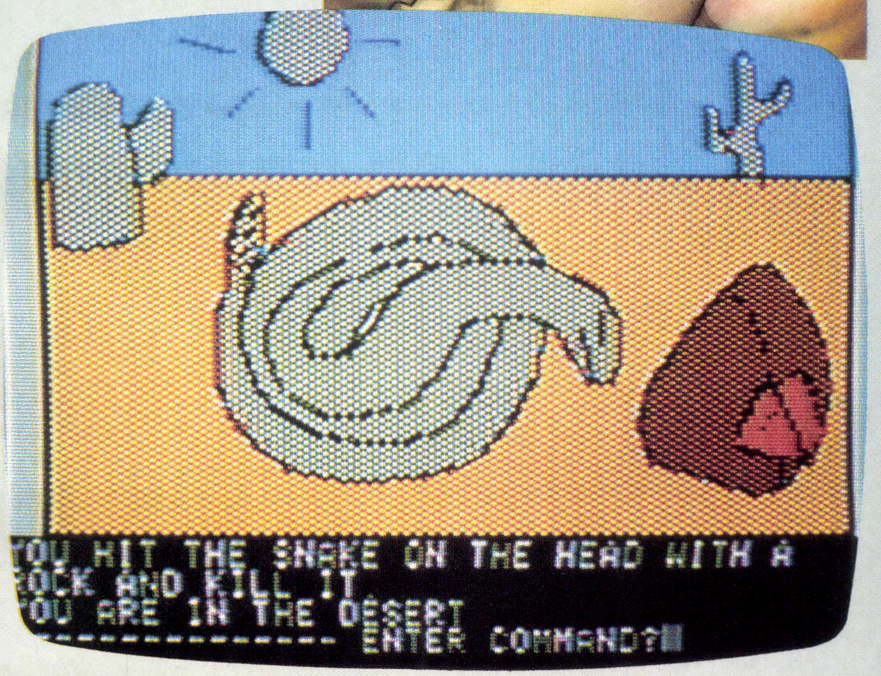
your investigating tools are robots, each of which has limited sensory abilities—comes with its own colorful map. In general, though, making your own map is a good idea. The latest Infocom adventures are *Infidel*, in which you are cast as an archaeologist who must unravel an ancient Egyptian mystery while dealing with the interpersonal strife of members of your dig, and *Enchanter*, in which you can cast spells, one of which will turn others, as well as yourself, into newts. Infocom makes games for all home computer systems.

Graphic adventures will undoubtedly appeal more to the average gamer than the pure text adventure. Although they, like text games, don't provide the immediate gratification associated with the simple reflex game, they are somewhat more easily understood simply because the text is complemented with graphics. The self-proclaimed originators of the graphic adventure, or Hi-Res adventure as they call it, Sierra On-Line currently offers one of the best selections of adventure games on the market.

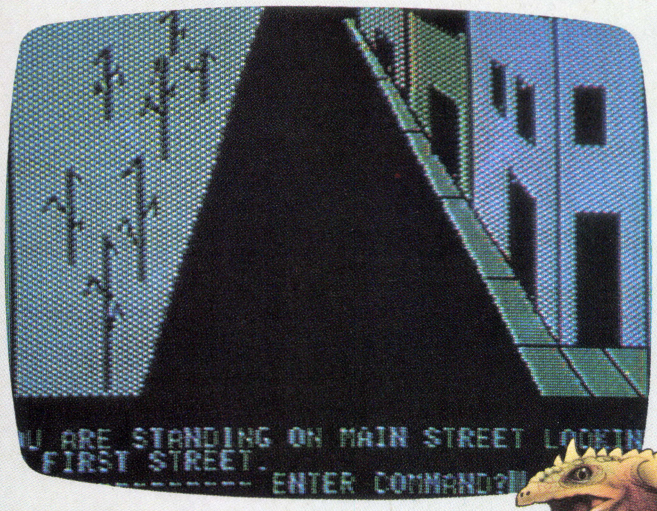
In many of their games, Sierra banks heavily on research of subject matter and manages to weave a thread of logical continuity and truth through each and every one of their games.

Time Zone, for example, is probably the largest game of its kind—all told, there are six discs, each with code on both sides. It contains over 1,300 different rooms and, according to the accompanying literature, over 1,400 "Hi-Res" pictures. If you manage to complete this quest, pat yourself on the back. *Time Zone* has enough material in it to fill almost 30 regular full-size adventures.

Time Zone is ambitious in its scope covering history from as far back as 400 million BC to as far in the future as 4082 AD. Historically and geographically speaking, it is for the most part accurate. Of course some changes were made and the instruction booklet encourages you to view these inconsistencies not as careless errors, but as harmless jokes dropped in to keep you on your toes.



The storyline tells of an alien society called the Neburites who have been watching earth develop since the Stone Age. At first they watched with benign curiosity, but over time, they began to notice a disturbing trend. Earth men were advancing tôo fast and the Neburites feared that they would lose their lead in the race for technological supremacy.



Sirius' CRANSTON MANOR (above) and MISSION ASTEROID (top right). Below, ADVENTURELAND from Adventure International and TIME ZONE.

Neburon's ruler, Ramadu, decides to strike first and destroy Earth before it entertains any thoughts of interplanetary imperialism.

In addition to being a superb adventure game, *The Dark Crystal*, also from Sierra, bows as the first true movie-to-game adaptation. Cast as Jen, the hero of the movie, your goal is to retrieve the missing shard of the Dark Crystal before the Great Conjunction. If you fail, the world will forever lie under the tyranical reign of the Skeksis. Although the plot, images and storyline adhere to those set forth in the movie, this game can go off in directions you wouldn't encounter in the film version.

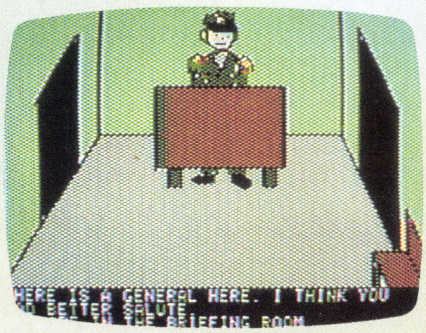
The documentation and directions included with *Dark Crystal* are brief. They tell you almost nothing of practical value about your journey, although some clues are provided in covert form. Inside the instruction booklet you'll find a four page story laden with tips and hints you may find useful during your search for the Crystal. Don't be fooled. The game is not aimed at younger audiences.

If you are a mythology buff you may find *Ulysses and the Golden Fleece* more to your liking.

Naturally, you are searching for the Golden Fleece and knowledge of mythology may be helpful. As in all Sierra adventures, conversing with the people you encounter during your quest is encouraged. In the case of *Ulysses*, bribery is often a necessary evil when hunting for information.

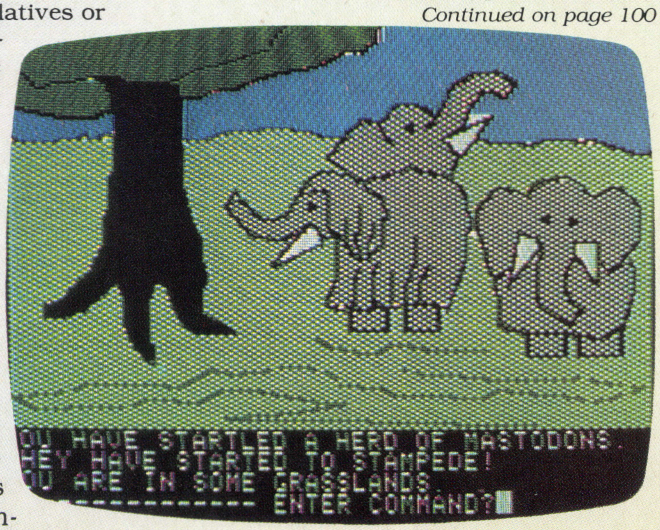
If these quests leave you uninspired, perhaps the goods that await you at *Cranston Manor* will offer the proper incentive. The owner of this estate, one O.M. Cranston, lived and died a rich miser. Since Cranston had no legal heirs like relatives or children to bequeath his estate to, the old codger's butler, Egor, jumped for joy when he learned of his employer's demise. Yet he was to receive nothing. Cranston didn't take it with him—he hid it in his vast estate. The compulsion to protect his riches consumed Cranston during his final days. Egor recalls watching the old man "tinker with strange suits of armor and toy soldiers. He turned lavish fountains into aquariums of death. Animals were trained to give their lives if necessary to protect the riches." Vast riches await you in *Cranston Manor*, but a proportionate amount of peril lies there as well.

If money doesn't motivate, what about love? In *The Wizard and the Princess* you play the wanderer and must sidestep a series of diversions and obstacles planted by Harlin the Malevolent. If you succeed, you'll reach his castle and find the princess, Priscilla. Is any girl worth all this trouble, let alone one named Priscilla? This is something you alone can determine.



Mission Asteroid is probably a lot closer to home for gamers who, like myself, were weaned on shoot-em-ups. It doesn't necessarily play like one, but the storyline corresponds to one you'd find in a typical blast-

Continued on page 100

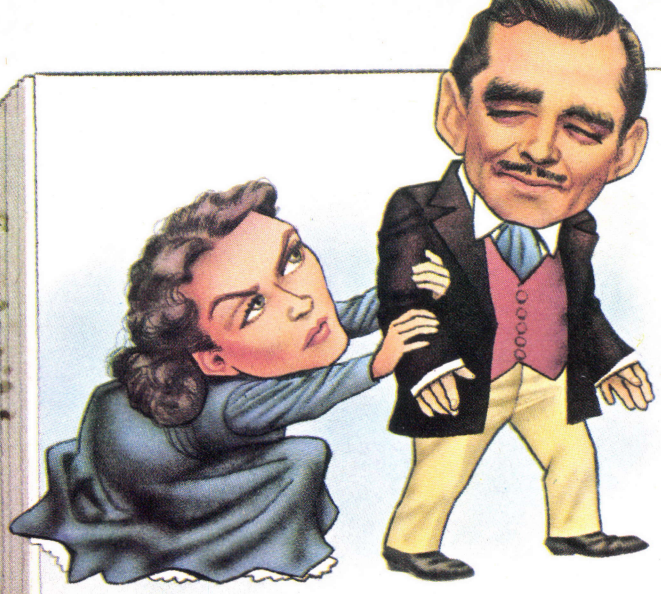


OFF THE BEATEN TRAKBALL

DICTIONARY of OVEREXTENDED BASIC

Supplementary commands for hackers

A linguist's job is never done. Just when he thinks he's finished inventing a language once and for all, he finds he has no single word that means "large carnivorous animal wearing spats" and it's back to the old quill and parchment to think one up. It's the same with computer languages. After mastering BASIC, you suddenly realize that several useful commands are absent that would make programming a lot easier.

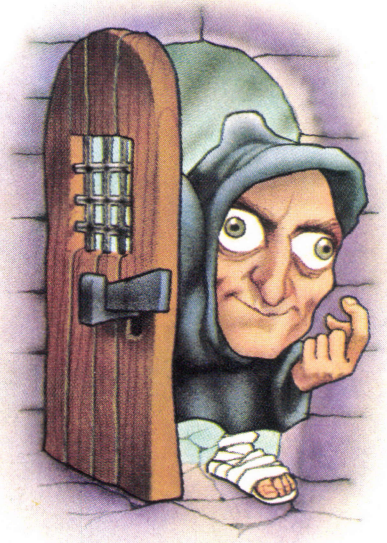


DONTGOTO Sure GOTO is useful for all those lines you want your computer to go to in your program, but what about all those lines you *don't* want your computer to go to? There are always more of them than the others. How in the world do you get your computer to *not* go there? Using the DONTGOTO command, of course. DONTGOTO sends the computer nowhere but, more importantly, it doesn't send it just any nowhere. No sir. It doesn't send it to a specific nowhere. Just type in DONTGOTO followed by *any* line you don't want to the computer to go to and it will not go to that specific line. Example: 100 DONTGOTO 90. It won't.

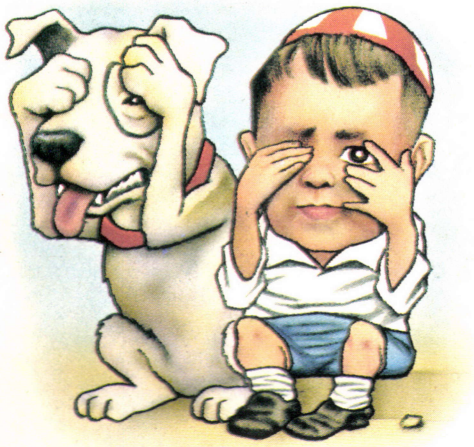
GOCHOKE Less a command than an epithet, GOCHOKE is one of the most useful and therapeutic items found in Overextended BASIC. It is particularly handy in programs that simply refuse to run. No matter how many times you go back and fix up those ridiculous DATA statements with all the ones and zeros in them, the only thing the computer comes back with is SYNTAX ERROR LINE 100. GOCHOKE is a fine way to vent frustration and the command is generally followed with something specific you wish the computer to choke on (creativity is encouraged here). Example:

```
100 DATA 110,101,001,010,100,111, HIKE
110 GOTO 100
RUN
```

After the computer comes back with the inevitable SYNTAX ERROR LINE 100 for the millionth time, you respond with 120 GOCHOKE ON A HAMHOCK. That's all there is to it but doesn't it feel good?

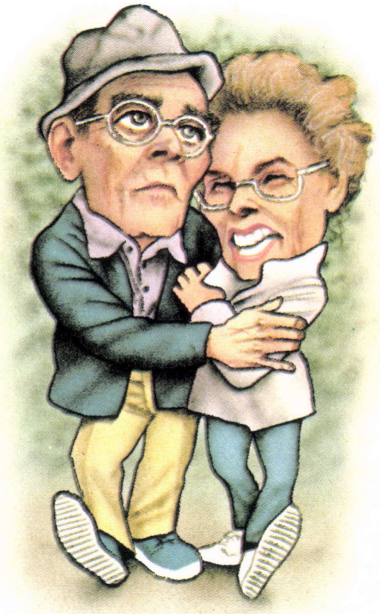


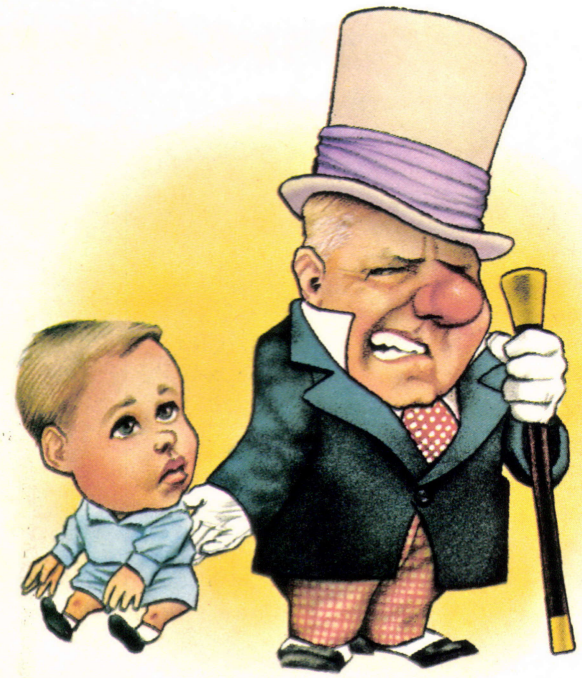
COMEIN In this relaxed, laid back, informal day and age, the use of certain rigid formalities can get on your nerves. COMEIN was originally conceived as a more familiar way of saying ENTER and goes beyond simple user friendliness taking a quantam leap into the realm of user intimacy. As computers get more and more personal, a COMEIN key will be included as standard equipment. Currently it has to be manually typed in and can be used only if a program is not locked. Example: 100 COMEIN THE PROGRAM'S OPEN.



PEEKABOO Unlike POKE and PEEK which are used to help you get more out of your computer by accessing all that memory hidden deep in the recesses of the machine, PEEKABOO is a command that allows you to get *less* out of your computer by accessing infantile memory including prenatal experiences. The PEEKABOO command takes your computer out of BASIC and into BABL (Beginners All-purpose Baby Lingo). Different code number addresses access different immature skills. Example: 100 PEEKABOO 2264 accesses the memory bank in which gibberish is stored and allows you to program using a vocabulary that consists almost entirely of GAGA and BYE BYE. Other PEEKABOO addresses will result in the loss of fine motor skills, the ability to chew solid foods and a return of the tendency to try to put everything from small rocks to automobiles in your mouth.

STROLL Computers are too darn fast. They can run through a complicated tax program like that. And no one wants to jump right into a technology that moves at the speed of light just like no one would think of hopping onto a speeding bus. You expect it to slow down first. Of course, stopping is best, but slow will do in a pinch. What's needed, then, is a way to sort of ease into computer technology the way you wade into cold water. STROLL is a means of hi-tech wading. Used in place of RUN, STROLL greatly decelerates the speed at which your average computer runs. Later, you can speed up gradually by using the commands RACEWALK, JOG and finally, RUN.





GOAWAY This command is generally used in situations with which you don't want to be bothered. Similar to GOCHOKE, GOAWAY is more imperative and final. Say, for example, the computer comes up with SYNTAX ERROR? or TILT, you simply type in GOAWAY and the program retreats with its tail between its metaphorical legs. GOAWAY is frequently, but by no means always, preceded by OH as in OHGOAWAY and can be followed by ALREADY, depending on how fed up you are by then.

ELECTRONIC FUN'S Top 10

HOME

1. ENDURO (A) (Activision)
2. ROBOT TANK (A) (Activision)
3. FROGGER (A) (Parker)
4. Q*BERT (A) (Parker)
5. JUNGLE HUNT (A) (Atari)
6. POLE POSITION (A) (Atari)
7. KANGAROO (A) (Atari)
8. KEYSTONE KAPERS (A) (Activ.)
9. CENTIPEDE (A) (Atari)
10. BURGERTIME (I) (Mattel)

ARCADE

1. POLE POSITION (Atari)
2. GYRUSS (Centuri)
3. MS. PAC-MAN (Midway)
4. GALAGA (Midway)
5. MR. DO! (Universal)
6. STAR TREK (Sega)
7. MILLIPEDE (Atari)
8. TIME PILOT (Centuri)
9. FRONT LINE (Taito)
10. Q*BERT (Gottlieb)

COMPUTER

1. MINER 2049ER (Big Five)
2. ZAXXON (Datasoft)
3. FROGGER (Sierra On-Line)
4. ZORK I (Infocom)
5. CHOPLIFTER (Broderbund)
6. DEADLINE (Infocom)
7. JUMPMAN (Epyx)
8. WIZARDRY (Sir-Tech)
9. ZORK II (Infocom)
10. TEMPLE OF APSHAI (Epyx)

Computer Top Ten courtesy of Softsel

The arcade Top Ten courtesy of REPLAY MAGAZINE, the coin-op Bible. The home games Top Ten was compiled by contacting retailers across the country. (A) stands for Atari, VCS, (I) for Intellivision and (C) for ColecoVision.

Riley

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Which player is snatching victory from the jaws of defeat?

Find out fast. Jungle Hunt is so much like the arcade, you can't go in green. Like the player on the left. He'll get snapped up by the crocodile with the wide open mouth. But get the croc with the partly open mouth and score 200 points, like the player on the right.

Only Atari makes Jungle Hunt for use with the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems, and a version exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.

So explore the stores for Jungle Hunt. And learn it like a native.

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Because River Raid and Kaboom! have been re-designed to take full advantage of home computer capabilities.

Far beyond anything you've ever experienced before in video games.

Unique graphics, crisp detail and brilliant sound all come together with spectacular impact.

River Raid,™ the battle adventure up the "River of No Return."

The realism of Carol Shaw's River Raid is utterly amazing.

It challenges your reflexes, stamina and strategic savvy as you battle your way up the winding river.

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Larry Kaplan's Mad Bomber is back. The buckets are back.

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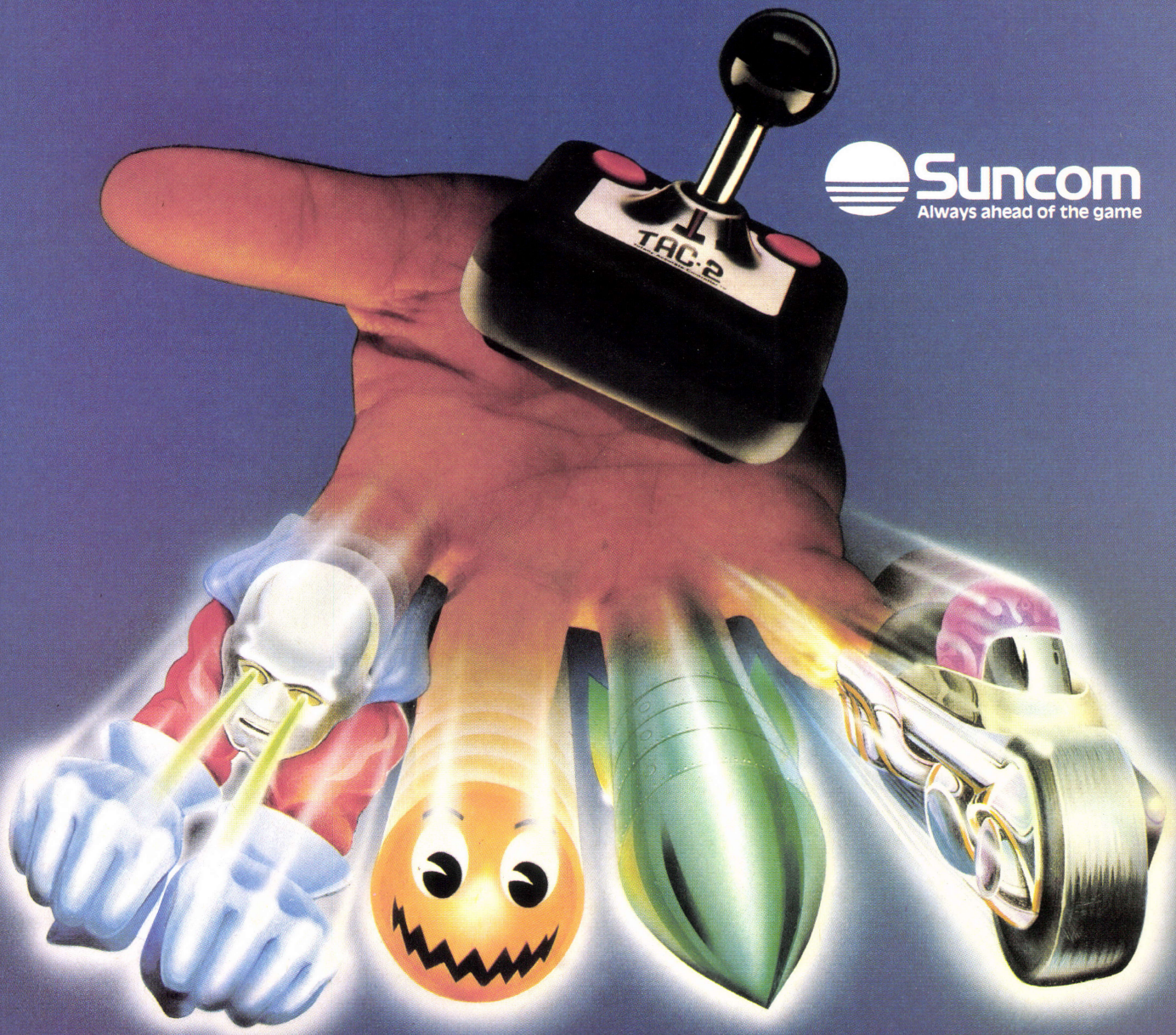

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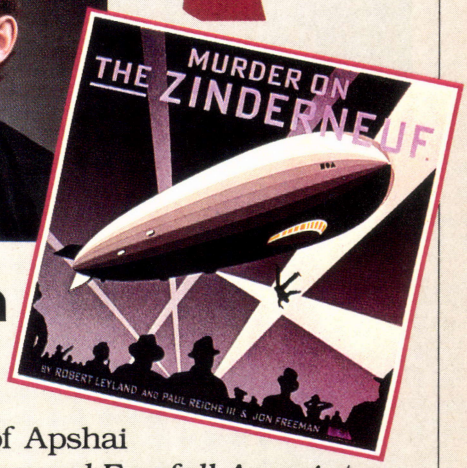
GAMEMAKERS

The Freefall Factor



Architects and authors of Archon

It reads like a Harlequin romance. She worked on computer program design, he was a programmer. They met while working on Star Warrior, *and went on to* Temple of Apshai *together. Hand in hand, Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall formed Freefall Associates and designed* Archon. *They married and lived happily ever after.*

Interview by Phil Wiswell

EF: In the world of computer games, the name Jon Freeman is not unknown as co-founder of Automated Simulations and author of many of its games. But what about Anne Westfall? How did you come to design video games?

AW: I started as a civil engineering programmer. After I met Jon, he talked me into doing some work for Automated Simulations, but that was the first game programming I had done and even then I was working on conversions, not on a lot of new projects.

EF: So you didn't come from Jon's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS crowd?

AW: No, the first *D&D* I played was after I met Jon.

EF: Are you a self-taught programmer?

AW: I took some programming courses. But I did teach myself assembler language.

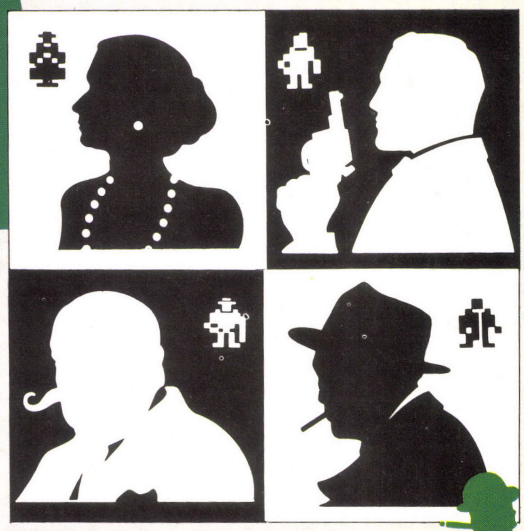
EF: What system do you use to develop your games?

AW: The Atari 800. I like the Atari.

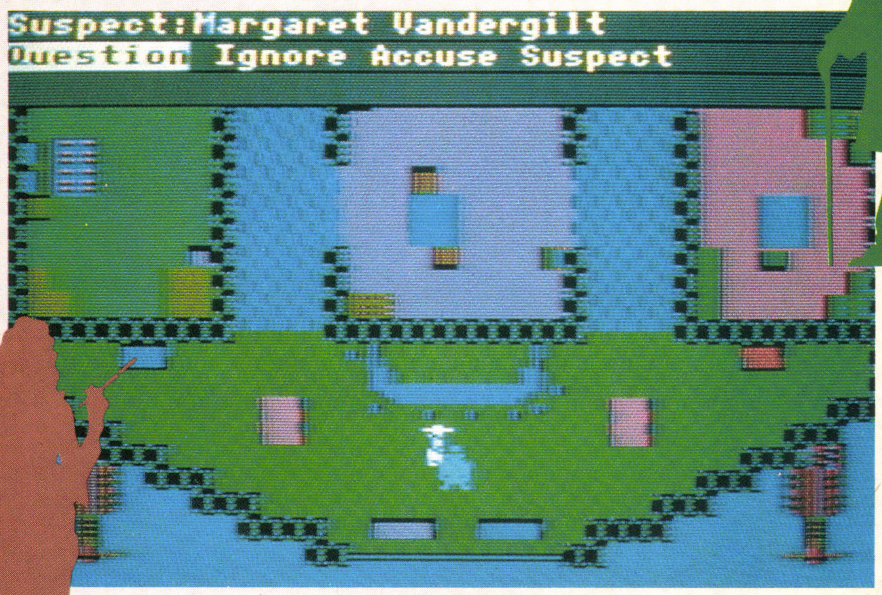
EF: Why?

AW: Probably because it was designed to be a game machine. It has features that are accessible. It took me a while, but I know how to use them. The Apple is a good machine, but it wasn't designed to be a *game* machine. The Atari has what are known as "player-missile graphics," which is what allows you to make an object pass in front of something else on the screen. The scrolling features of the Atari are also nice and haven't been taken advantage of to a large degree. It allows you to use a board that is much larger than the screen. It's like you're looking through a

Westfall and Freeman with ARCHON associate Paul Reiche III (center).



MURDER ON THE ZINDERNEUF is set on a zeppelin while ARCHON (next page) combines chess strategy, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS beasts and shooting action.



window that can scroll around on this giant board with very nice motion.

JF: Atari took some features of their machine that would be useful if the user was programming a game and made them reasonably easy to use, compared to the Apple or any other computer on the market. You can get sort of a smooth animation on the Apple, but it takes a lot more memory, more code, more work. If you know what you're doing on the Atari—and that is a key caveat because many people programming on the Atari still don't really know how to use it—it's easier to program than an Apple. You can program an entire game on the Atari, pretending in a way that it's an Apple—their bases are close enough that you can get away with that. But you end up using more memory and time than if you know how to do it the Atari way. It has four sound channels and a fairly sophisticated way of defining sounds, and the commands are pretty straightforward. You just have to give it a couple of numbers and you get an explosion. In order to create sound on the Apple, it's like you're telling it to do two things at once: "Okay, make the sound, now go back and draw part of the picture, now continue the sound, now draw more picture." The computer is constantly juggling sound and graphics, but the Atari makes this fairly easy to accomplish.

EF: Can you then download your games onto the Apple?

JF: Not easily.

EF: Is it easier the other way around?

JF: Yes, because the Atari is a more sophisticated game machine. It's pretty easy to do a conversion of an Apple game to the Atari, but when you're going the other way around—bringing player-missile graphics and four channel sound and everything else to the Apple—it's tough. I don't know how Electronic Arts will do some of our stuff, like *Archon*, on the Apple. They're working on the Apple version, but I don't know how they will deal with the sound problem. Often, we have all four sound channels going.

AW: But I saw a version the other day and was impressed. There are differences, but it's still *Archon*.

EF: Did Electronic Arts take your games "no questions asked?"

AW: No, they were very involved and very interested in making sure the games were good ideas. They stayed with us. I think the people at Electronic Arts want games that they want to play too. Our association with them has been a learning experience for both companies, but a very good one.

JF: What they're doing—the niche they're trying to occupy and the approach they're taking—is about 99 percent of what we were looking for a company to do: handle all the stuff we *didn't* want to handle and do it professionally. And they have.

EF: So did you storyboard everything before the screen lit up?

JF: For both *Archon* and *Zinderneuf* we had reasonably detailed scripts before we did any programming at all.

AW: Yes, but before we finished the scripts I was working on a few things to make sure they were possible.

EF: Whose concepts are ARCHON and ZINDERNEUF?

JF: We did the two games simultaneously. Anne did the programming on *Archon* and Robert Leyland programmed *Murder on the Zinderneuf*. Paul Reiche and I split the design work on both.

EF: Electronic Arts has on-staff producers to work with companies like Freefall. Who was your producer, and did things interface smoothly between

the two companies?

JF: It went pretty smoothly as far as *Archon* was concerned, and we ran into a few more difficulties with *Zinderneuf* having to do with the fact that certain elements were missing from the game until the final version was done. The particular element from *Zinderneuf* was the ability of the pieces, the suspects, to move around. That meant any time you wanted to ask someone a question, you knew exactly where they were in the room. So there was never any suspense. You never got any information about how people in the game related to one another by watching where they went, whose rooms they went into, etc. So there were a lot of things that had to do with verisimilitude, excitement and tension of the game that weren't there, all because the pieces weren't moving in the early versions. We knew that and kept telling Electronic Arts, but . . .

AW: They couldn't really see what it was going to be like without those things in place. And when we added those elements, they said "Wow, this *is* different."

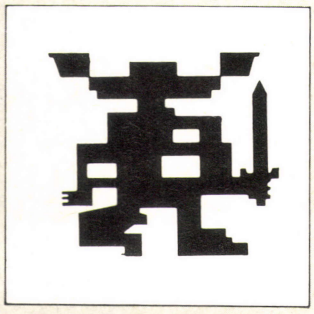
EF: Is this a function of the difference between traditional game design and computer game design?

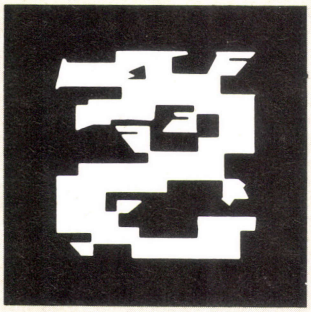
JF: Now that you bring it up, I'd say there's not a comparable problem in board game design. No one element would make that much difference. In a computer game, the addition of a dynamic element like the one we described can change not only the mechanics but the entire feel of the game to a very dramatic degree.

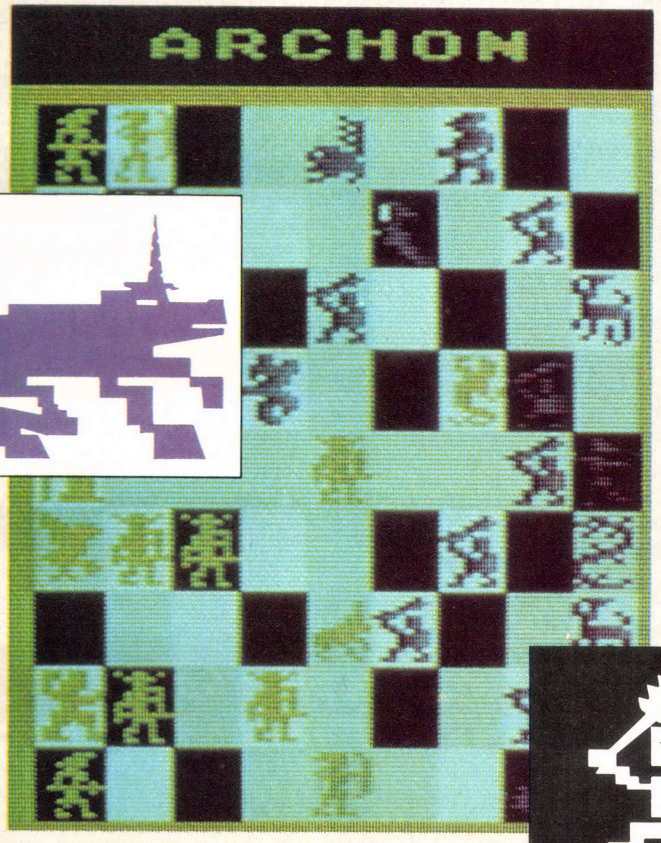
JF: Fortunately, we feel confident in what we're doing. When someone complains or tries to change something and we disagree, basically we don't do it. We're comfortable enough with what we're doing and believe in it enough that we won't be swayed. We won't get ourselves into a situation where we feel unhappy because we're doing something against what we believe in.

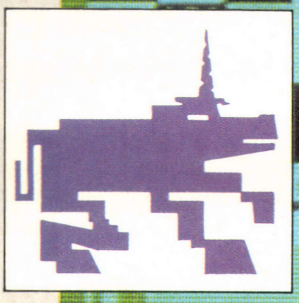
EF: Were Robert Leyland's contributions to ZINDERNEUF strictly in the area of programming?

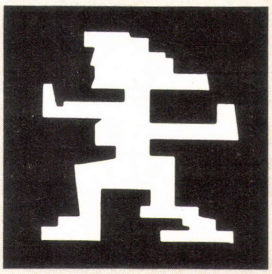
JF: Mostly programming, but not strictly. He is probably responsible for repeatedly urging us to use more and more "tokenization." In *Murder on the Zinderneuf* (and this is giving away some design secrets), if you ask a question about a live person, you get an answer in the present tense; if dead, they're in the past tense. If male, you get personal pronouns that are male, and things like that. You get responses to the particular detective doing the asking, like, "Well, you see, Miss . . . ." if you're playing Charity Flaire. Or if you're playing Klutzeau, you get, "Well, Inspector . . . ." All those things are done to maximize the number of responses and the flexibility of the whole game. They are done using what we call "tokens." The program checks to see who is talking, who is being talked too, who you are talking about, alive or dead, male or female. Robert was most responsible for our extensive use of this. Also, when you ask someone about themselves, you will get unique answers from each. Veronica Marlowe will say, "Read my biography." Someone else will just say, "Buzz off!" Robert is also the person who suggested we set the stage on a dirigible, instead of my original thought of a haunted house or mansion. Paul and Robert decided they wanted to do something different.

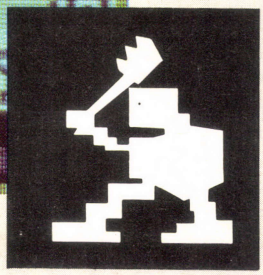












EF: What mistakes has the video games industry made that Electronic Arts is trying to set right?

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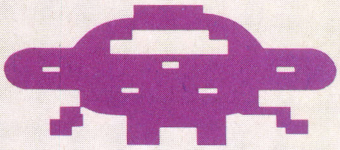
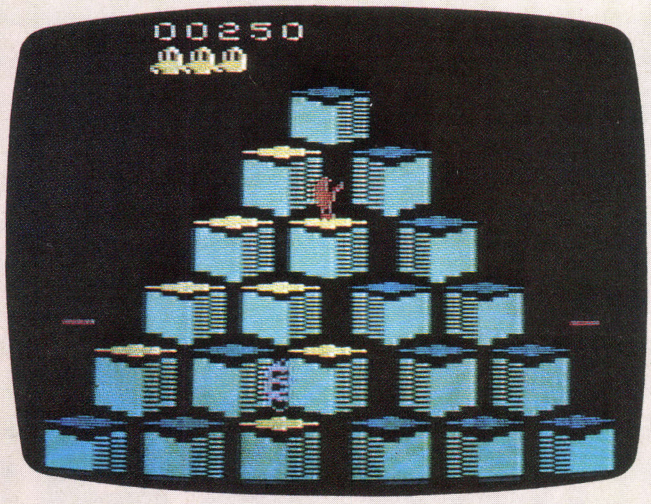


Q*Bert's 20,000 point pyramid



Q*BERT ★★★★

Parker Brothers/Atari VCS

By Randi Hacker

Even those of us who have grown to love Q*Bert would have to agree that, cosmetically speaking, he's no competition for a Christie Brinkley or a Brooke Shields. His charm came more from the comic appeal of someone like Fanny Brice or, even more aptly, Jimmy Durante. Still, we loved him in the arcades and, largely due to Parker's sterling adaptation, we are going to love him at home, too.

You start out, as you would expect, at the top of a pyramid and you have to jump up and down turning the tops of cubes from one color to another. This relaxing, aerobic pursuit is marred by Coily, the purple snake who clearly has some prejudice against large shnozzolas and wishes to rid the world of their offensive presence. You can either craftily avoid him by jumping up and down like the dickens or you can quickly jump onto one of the magical disks which will transport you *a la Arabian Nights* to the top level at the same time that they lure the regressed Coily to his doom. As you glide upwards, you can thumb your ample nose at him. Remember though, that death is merely a passing phase for Coily, as he quickly reappears to torture you some more. He is almost too predictable in this version, often rising from the dead at the right side of the pyramid, one cube down from the top.

The first four levels require that you change the tops of the cubes only once but, at the fifth level, you've got to hop on each cube twice and, at the sixth, it's three hops to finish. With the difficulty switch on "B," you'll find the gameplay somewhat easier than the arcade version, but switch to "A" and you're in for a real challenge with faster action and a great many more colored balls to avoid. Although Parker claims that both Wrongway and Ugh are included in the VCS version, we've yet to coax them out of their hiding places.

So, is a *Q*Bert* in the hand worth two in the arcades? Our answer to this pressing question is a resounding yes. Parker has done a noble job of bringing the little old hosenose home.

> The controls present a little bit of a problem. Hold the joystick diagonally and you'll find your control over Q*Bert's movements to be more precise.

MOONSWEEPER ★★★½

Imagic/Atari VCS

By George Kopp

Now that designers for the VCS have discovered 3-D, there's no stopping them. Activision has given us such masterpieces of perspective as *Enduro* and *Robot Tank*, and now Imagic turns the trick with *Moonsweeper*, a space rescue and shoot-em-up that takes you speeding along the surfaces of the moons of Jupiter.

Moonsweeper is in two parts. Part one puts you in orbit around Jupiter where you must avoid or destroy various pieces of cosmic flotsam and jetsam. You must also land on a moon, colored blue, green, yellow or red in order to rescue stranded miners. Run into a moon and the game enters part two, a high-speed, low-altitude cruise during which you must rescue stranded space miners. Barring your path are towers, rocket-firing surface destroyers and satellites. Helping you is a radar display which indicates miners' locations. Rescue six miners and pass through the accelerator rings and you're launched back into orbit to find another moon.

As you progress the game gets tougher—more obstacles and fewer miners. Your joystick serves as a speed control, but you have to go pretty fast to really rack up points. The surface destroyers seem to come at you at a pretty constant rate, but if you go too slowly you won't be able to pick up your quota of six miners before a destroyer blasts you. The difficulty levels only relate to the level at which you begin the game (blue and green moons are easiest). Keep at it long enough and you'll be up to the most difficult moons.

You have four moonsweepers at the start of the game and a freebie every 10,000 points. When in orbit you can use your shields, but you'll lose points if you do. Lose all your moonsweepers and the game plays *Swing*

hits & misses

Low, Sweet Chariot.

The graphics in orbit are dull, but once you get to the moon's surface all that changes. Imagic has succeeded in producing the illusion of motion, right down to the moonsweeper's shadow as it skims the surface. The surface destroyers are devious enough without being impossible to hit. Winning technique requires a combination of evasive action and a quick trigger. Despite the fact that you are restricted to side to side movement the action is so intense that you hardly notice.

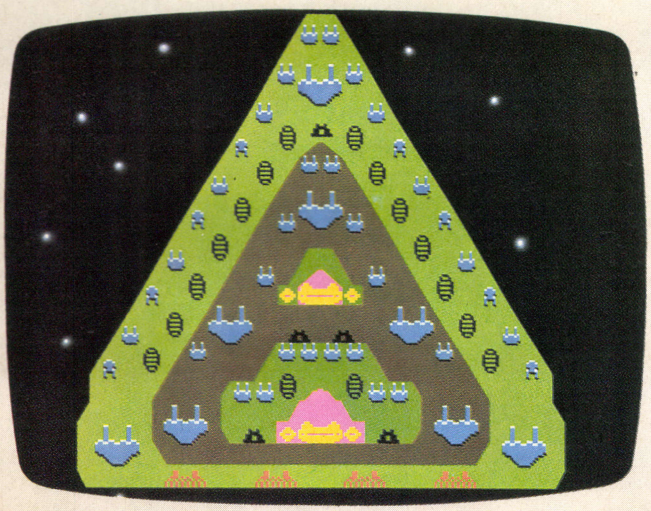
When in orbit, keep your movements to a minimum. It doesn't take much to evade space debris, and you have to be pretty well centered to hit a moon.

THE DREADNAUGHT FACTOR ////

Activision/Intellivision

By Michael Blanchet

The underlying conflict in *The Dreadnaught Factor* is one that should be familiar to those of you who, like myself, have seen each of Lucas' flicks a hundred or so times—one good guy (you) squares off against many bad; a few zealots vs. the evil technocrats and their machines of death and destruction. At stake here is the planet Terra, a benign, peaceful world. You, commanding a small but heavily armed Novaray fighter, are the last line of defense. Unless you can halt the relentless march of the dreadnaughts (originally battleships bristling with cannons) Terra will be destroyed.



In any game you select (there are seven ranging from practice to "impossible"), you are given 10 of these Novaray fighters. Each is dispatched alone to the Stargate. Here you will engage the dreadnaught ships. A dreadnaught is much larger than one TV screen. In fact, each of these ships spills over onto five or six full screens.

The deck of each dreadnaught is covered with all manner of space age gizmos and munitions. Ultimately, your goal is to knock out each and every one of the ship's 16 energy vents with strontium bombs. By doing so you'll "create a lethal pressurization deep within the dreadnaught." Needless to say, the behemoth explodes at this point in much the same way the Death Star bit the big one when Luke popped a pair of photon torpedoes into that ship's thermal exhaust port.

Each battle is divided into attack runs. Thus each time you pass over the stern of your target (you cannot move backwards, so judicious and accurate firing is a must) you return to the Stargate. The dreadnaught then creeps a bit closer to Terra. By knocking out any or all of the dreadnaught's four engines you can slow the vessel's approach and buy yourself more time in the process.

Avoid the temptation to fly fast. With each pass the dreadnaught moves closer to the stargate.

MS. PAC-MAN ★★★★

Atari/Atari 5200

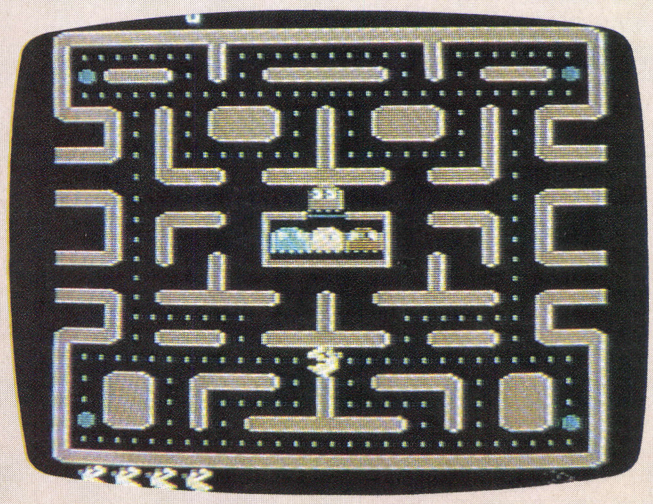
By Michael Blanchet

When Atari introduced the 5200 super system they changed all the rules. With a console this powerful one no longer needs to judge a game against it's coin-op inspiration. Now you only need to decide if you like the game or not. If you do, rest assured that the 5200 version will be, for all practical purposes, an exact replica of the 5200 and *Ms. Pac-Man* is no exception.

For those of you who do not frequent game rooms, a brief description is in order. *Ms. Pac-Man*, as you know, was the much ballyhooed sequel to the phenomenally successful *Pac-Man* arcade game. Although the basic premise of the game mirrors the objectives set forth in *Pac-Man*, *Ms. Pac-Man* differs from the original in a manner I find common to the female sex—it is much more difficult. Instead of one maze repeating level after level, *Ms. Pac-Man* offers four different labyrinths. Furthermore, patterns are almost useless in this game, making it the supreme test of one's ability to scramble and improvise under attack. Some of the other differences are subtle at best but still lend to the appeal of this game. For one thing, the bonus objects float about the maze. The concept of intermissions, which was pioneered in *Pac-Man*, is put to good use here. All told, there are three such sideshows which fall between the first three rounds.

There's not much to say on the subject of graphics. They're as good as you're gonna get anywhere. Yes, she has a bow and yes, the bonus objects look just like they do in the arcade game.

My only bone of contention (I'm sure I speak for everyone on this count) is with the controllers. Unless you have the nerves of a diamond cutter and the hands of a brain surgeon, chances are you're going to screw up and run into a ghost on a painfully frequent basis. Unintentionally, yes, but alas, it will happen and often at that. It's a shame that such a good game must be soiled by such a ridiculously designed piece of hardware. Nevertheless, ardent 5200 owners will somehow manage to overcome this small obstacle. One way might be to get one of those self centering mechanisms for your 5200 controller. They run about five bucks a pair. Once attached to the controller housing, it allows the stick to move only north, south, east or west. The gray zone in between is effectively eliminated by this nifty little add-on.



Bally/Midway, the makers of the coin-op version, issued *Ms. Pac-Man* as "a thank you to all the female gamers who supported the games' male counterpart, *Pac-Man*." To say this game is for girls only would be ludicrous. This is one everybody can enjoy. A solid buy, for sure.

> Since the 5200 controller is so unresponsive, anticipate which way you're going to move before you get there.

FORTRESS OF NARZOD ★★★½

GCE/Vectrex

By Marc Berman

Here's a game with 3-D graphics, fast action and an original concept. It comes very close to being a great game, except for one thing: It's so darn hard to win.

The goal (and the means to attain it) are fairly simple: Destroy the Fortress of Narzod. There are four screens. The first three show crooked, walled roads down which you must pilot your hovercraft. Intent on stopping you are Warbirds, Ghouls, Tarantulas and DoomGrabbers. Each screen pits you against three waves of these meanies. Blast them all and advance to the fourth screen where a musclebound discus thrower launches Spikers at you. Eliminate this Olympic hopeful and the fortress will disintegrate.

Vectrex graphics have never looked better. As the enemies advance they loom larger (*a la Battlezone*). The Warbirds are reminiscent of the flapping killers in *Demon Attack*, and the Ghouls have a bloodcurdling habit of shriveling up when you hit them.

At first glance one might think that restricting the gameplay to the narrow roads would limit the action. Well, the playfield *is* smaller, but there are so many possibilities for ricochet shots that the action is never less than 100 percent exciting. Also, wounded Warbirds can be used as temporary shields which change the battle grid. The roads are slightly different in each screen so, if you think you've figured the angles on one screen, you have to begin all over on the next. The

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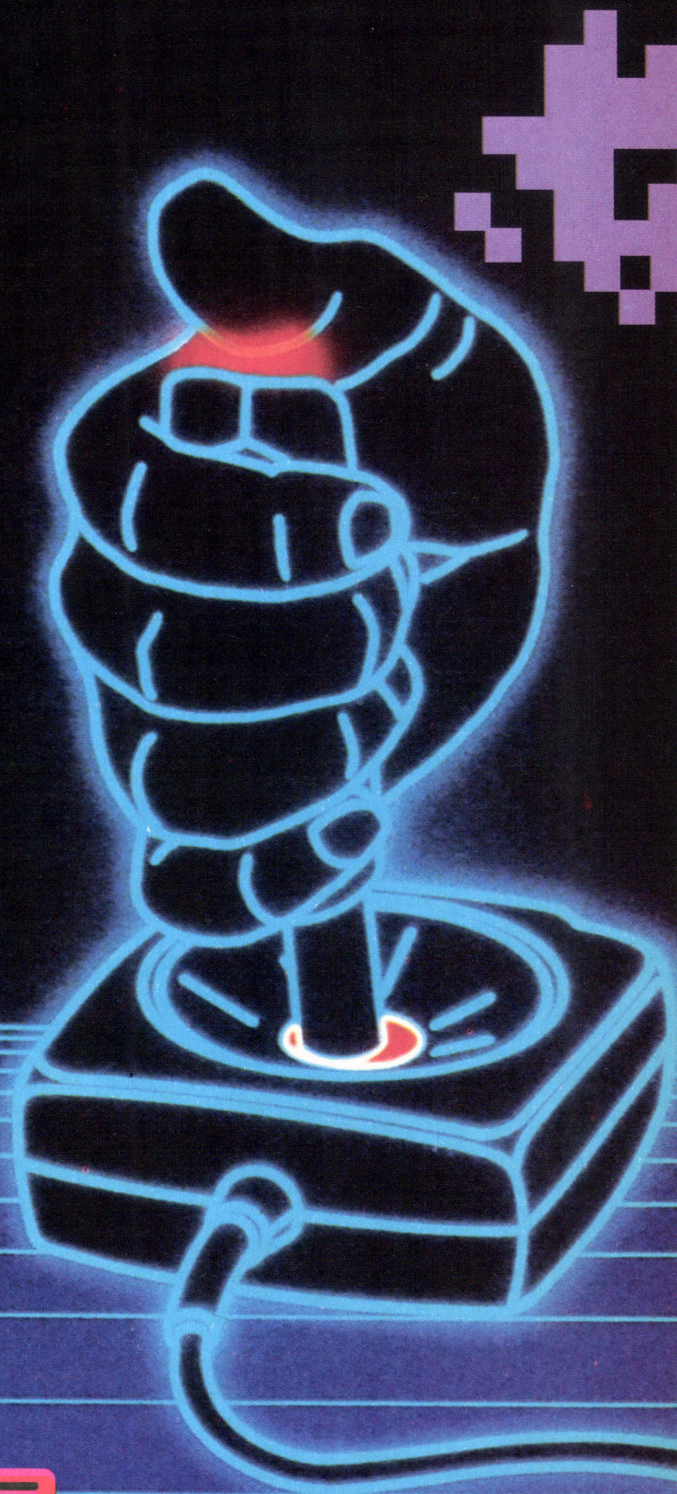

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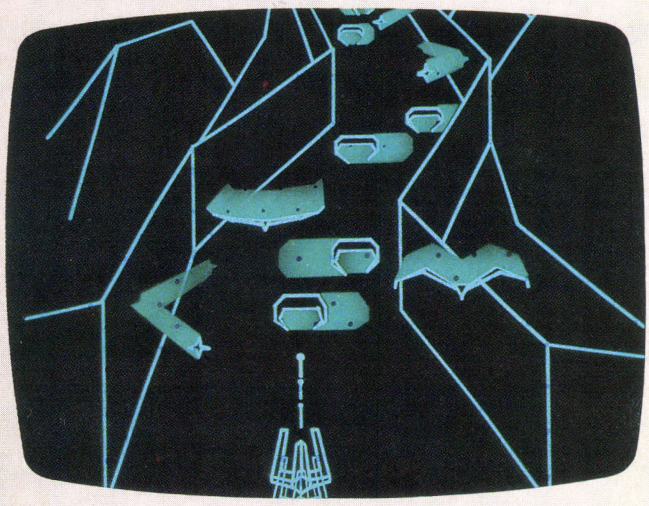
roads look like the Great Wall of China.

There are three levels of difficulty for one or two players, but the easiest one will keep you busy for hours—which is the only problem with this game. Vectrex should either have given the player more than six hovercrafts, eased up on the bullet-spitting Warbirds, or something because for your average lug, getting past the third road is almost impossible.



Stay to the left in the first screen and to the right in the second. Bank your shots off the first wall as much as possible and avoid shooting straight down toward the guard tower.

WALL BALL ★★★

Avalon Hill/Atari VCS

By William Michael Brown

Being a longtime fan of both the sport of racquetball and Atari's *Breakout*, I've often wondered why no one ever produced a video game that combined the best elements of both. After all, I thought, it's such a logical idea that someone ought to be able to do it right, and then the basic appeal of these games would turn the cart into a hit.

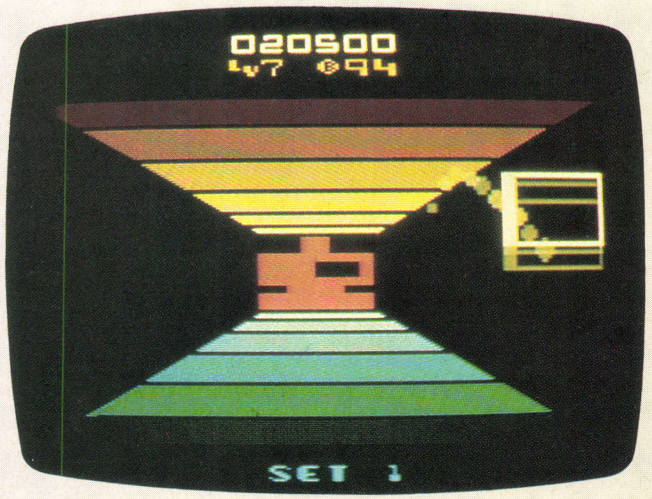
I thought I had my answer a couple of years ago when Apollo launched up its *Racquetball* and then promptly went out of business. Anybody who played that dog could see the problem: It was apparently just too hard to come up with a good video representation of 3-D racquetball court action, let alone adding in the brick-busting stuff from *Breakout*.

Guess I wrote off the idea too soon. Avalon Hill's new *Wall Ball* has not only all the 3-D racquetball action in place, but also features a brick-smashing goal that demands more concentration than *Breakout*.

In outline, the game is pretty simple. You're positioned at the end of a long, rectangular court equipped with a square racquet that lets you hit straight smashes to the back wall or glancing shots off the side walls, ceiling and floor. The back wall is covered with 72 colored "bricks;" you have to knock the ball into at least 57 of them to win a game. Depending on the level you're playing, the ball will be served to you anywhere from 10 to 99 times, and since there's no rear wall, you've got to keep each serve in play or lose it.

Getting all 57 bricks demands some pretty fiendish concentration on ball control. The racquet's frame and "sweet spot" each give you very different shot characteristics, and there's also a fire-button-activated "smash" feature that lets you get sweet spot results from the frame. The ball itself, however, is perfectly elastic—it always bounces just as hard off your racquet as it does off the walls—and hence it's very difficult to place it exactly where you want it. Until you get the hang of the racquet, your first few sessions of *Wall Ball* are going to be very frustrating.

The game could have been improved with some color on the side walls, and the missed-ball buzzer is enough to have you gnashing your teeth with irritation after just a few hearings. But the 3-D illusion is nearly perfect, the higher difficulty levels—including the really wild Elimination rounds—are incredibly fast and furious, and the game/set/match structure is well-designed and satisfying to complete. All *Wall Ball* needs to be the game I once dreamed of is a two-player version.



Use the fire button to keep the ball on a steady course first, then use small joystick movements to set up a frame shot that will let you work a row of bricks.

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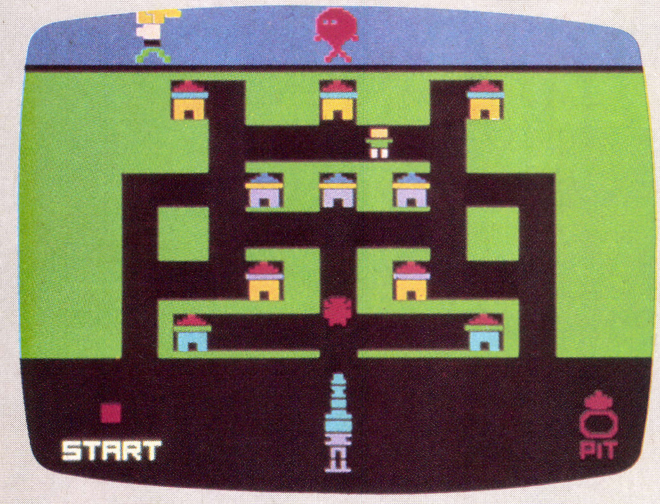


BLUEPRINT ★★

CBS/Atari VCS

By Gary Miller

One thing home video game makers have to realize is that in a home adaptation of an arcade game, you've got to stick as closely as possible to the coin-op original. If you don't, you're going to disappoint your first and most interested potential buyers—the people who know and love that arcade game. CBS' new *Blueprint* cart is a perfect case in point. While it *is* a very challenging game, it is also going to provide some major disappointments for those most likely to buy it.

In *Blueprint* you're a nameless hero with the familiar video game problem shared by Mario and Popeye, among others—you can't get to your girlfriend, Daisy Damsel, who's pursued across the top of the screen by the villainous Ollie Ogre. Down below, you've got to travel through a maze of houses, tracking down parts of an infernal contraption with which, when it's all assembled and before time runs out, you can shoot Ollie and free Daisy. You have to find the houses with the proper parts first, then pick each of them up and move them to corresponding positions on the blueprint at the bottom of the screen. Along the way you're tracked by the monster Fuzzy Wuzzy, who'll take away one of your three lives if he comes in contact with you. You've also got to avoid entering empty houses, otherwise you get a free bomb as a housewarming gift, and then have to travel to a bomb pit in the lower right corner to rid yourself of it.

All this is pretty much like the coin-op *Blueprint* except that much of the magic is gone. Take the contraption, for instance. Instead of the coin-op's wonderful Rube Goldberg assemblage of pipes, funnels and miscellaneous whatnots, we get an assortment of bare shapes, all piled up like the contents of someone's closet. Worse, the assembly rules have been drastically changed. In the coin-op, you could put the pieces together in any order; here they have to be assembled in rigid sequence from the ground up. This is no problem in the first screen, where you have only three parts to find—but try the third screen, where there are *eight* parts! If you should happen to find the wrong piece you have to *put it back* and search for the right one—and you might as well give up, since you'll never have enough time to get the contraption assembled if you make even one such mistake.

Of course, at the beginning of each screen you can *see* which houses the parts disappear into. But this is like cheating. The arcade game never let you see that. With a confederate to assist you in remembering where all the parts are, you can get to the eighth level very easily. But by then, the time limit is so short and the hero so difficult to control, you'll often find yourself entering the wrong house and ending up with a bomb in your hand anyway.

This *Blueprint* is not only challenging, it's exasperating and unfair. If that's your idea of a good time—and you either don't know or don't like the coin-op original—be my guest.

> When shooting at Ollie, wait until he runs directly above your machine and then fire as he passes over. You'll get him first time, every time.

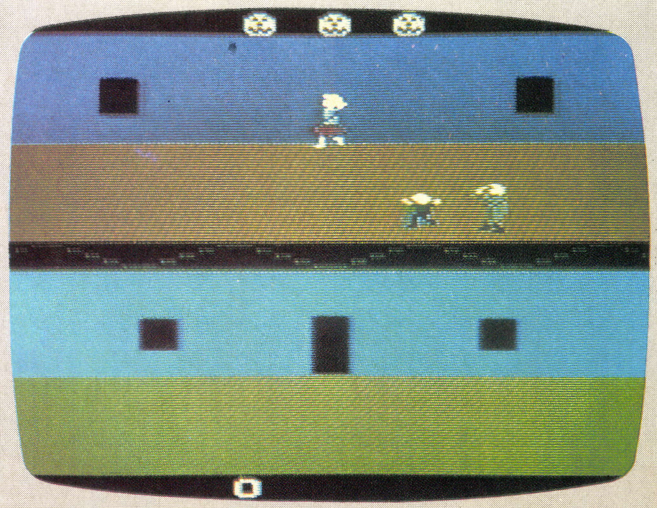
HALLOWEEN ★★★

Wizard Video Games/Atari VCS

By Ed Hulse

Wizard's *Halloween* is that rarest of video games licensed from another medium: It not only offers exciting gameplay, it's remarkably faithful to the spirit of the 1978 film from which it was adapted.

The basic situation which dominated John Carpenter's suspense movie classic has been effectively translated to game format: A maniacal knife-wielding



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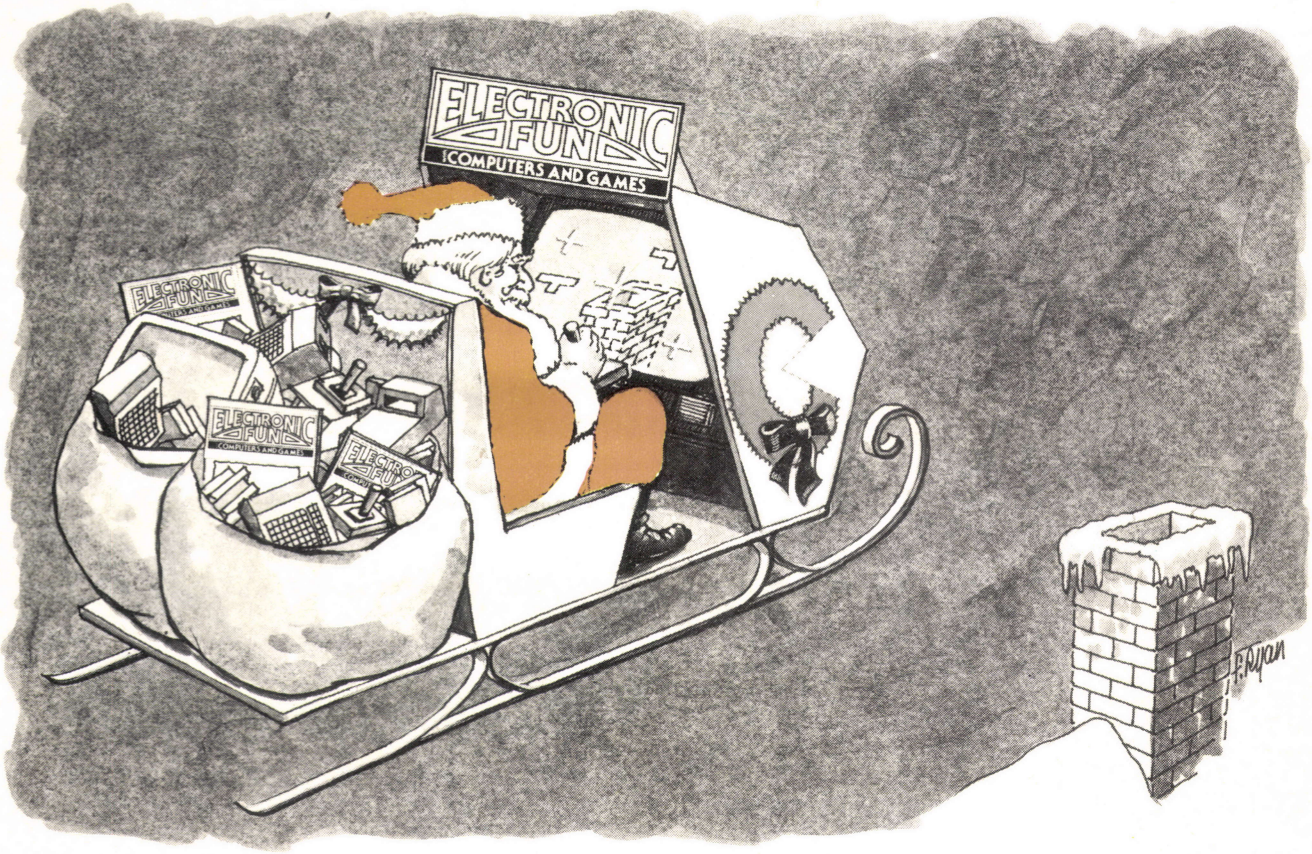

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killer pursues a young baby-sitter (the role played by Jamie Lee Curtis in the flick) in a darkened house. The object of the video game version is to lead the small children to the house's "safe rooms" before they are sliced up by the killer; each child safely delivered will earn you, as the baby-sitter, 675 points.

The playfield reveals sixteen rooms in the house and, as you move through them, you must avoid the killer, who will attempt to stab you and the children. You're not entirely without defenses, though; in certain rooms a knife will appear which you can seize by guiding yourself to it and pressing the joystick button. If the killer then attempts to attack you, pressing the button again will enable you to thrust the knife. If the killer is stabbed, he will flee from the room and you'll lose possession of your knife—which will later reappear in another room.

The "safe rooms" are located at both ends of the house, and once you've guided a child to one of them, you can press the joystick button and the 675 points will be added to your score (by the way, stabbing the killer is good for 325 points).

There's a danger, however: The killer can stab the little children, and if he manages to kill three in a row, you lose the game. Grabbing the kids can be accomplished in the same way as securing your knife.

To add some suspense and make things more difficult, the upper level of the house is prone to blackouts, and you may find yourself wandering in the dark without a clue as to where the killer may be. Well, no, that's not exactly true—whenever the maniac is in the room with you, you'll hear the movie's eerie theme music (which, by the way, has been perfectly reproduced for the game).

The main area of difference between movie and video game lies in the vulnerability of the children—the tots were never killed in the flick, but they can be beheaded in this game, with the electronic-graphics equivalent of blood oozing from their wounds. There are various levels of play and veteran game players will have plenty of opportunity to display their skills.

You can dodge the killer by jumping slightly above or below him; his thrusts are only effective on one level.

SPIKE

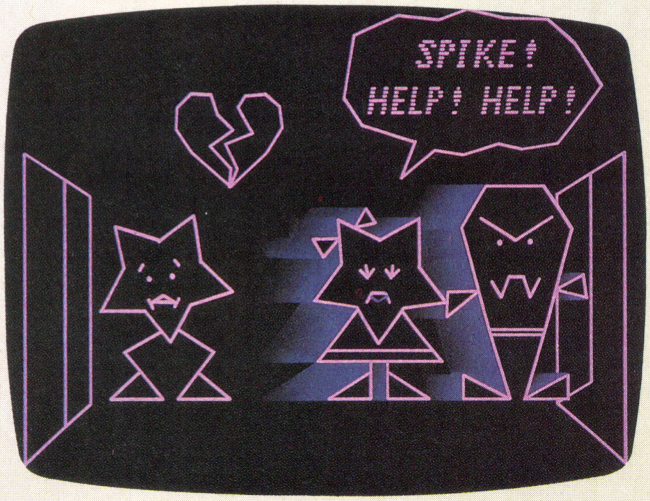
GCE/Vectrex

By George Kopp

The Vectrex system claims some of the best shoot-em-ups available for the home. The vector graphics provide amazing 3-D effects, hyperspace maneuverability and supernova explosions. Vectrex also gives you original concepts like the *Art Cart* which lets you draw and animate your own figures. What Vectrex hasn't given you, until now, is a *Donkey Kong*-like climber. Enter *Spike*.

The name *Donkey Kong* was mentioned for comparison purposes only. Actual comparisons will vary from player to player, depending on the coarseness of your vocabulary. The object of *Spike* is to rescue Molly from Spud, avoiding Bouncers and Birds. A unique feature of the game is that, through the magic of the Vectrex system, the characters talk. Molly says, "Oh no! Spike! Help!" Spike says, "Oh no, Molly!" and when he falls off a level or is otherwise dispatched, "Darnit!" He sounds like Froggy the Gremlin.

Starting at the bottom of the screen, Spike must leap



from one moving platform to another in order to make his way to the top. To climb up there is a moveable ladder you control with your Number One Vectrex button. Buttons Two and Three kick Spike's left and right feet, respectively. This can be helpful in repelling the Bouncer (a TV set on a spring). Button Four is the jump button.

The key challenge in *Spike* is remembering which button is which. Once that's done, playing the game itself seems like an anticlimax. There's only one difficulty level and the graphics are among the least successful Vectrex has yet produced. The characters are stick figures with five-pointed stars for heads. They are always smiling, even in the face of the gravest dangers. Molly, for example, when carried off by the evil Spud in a little animated intro, pleads movingly for assistance from Spike while wearing an enormous grin on her starface. Does she really want to be rescued? Do I really want to know?

Although the Bouncer can be killed with a kick, it's better to avoid him. If the kick is slightly off, he'll get you instead.

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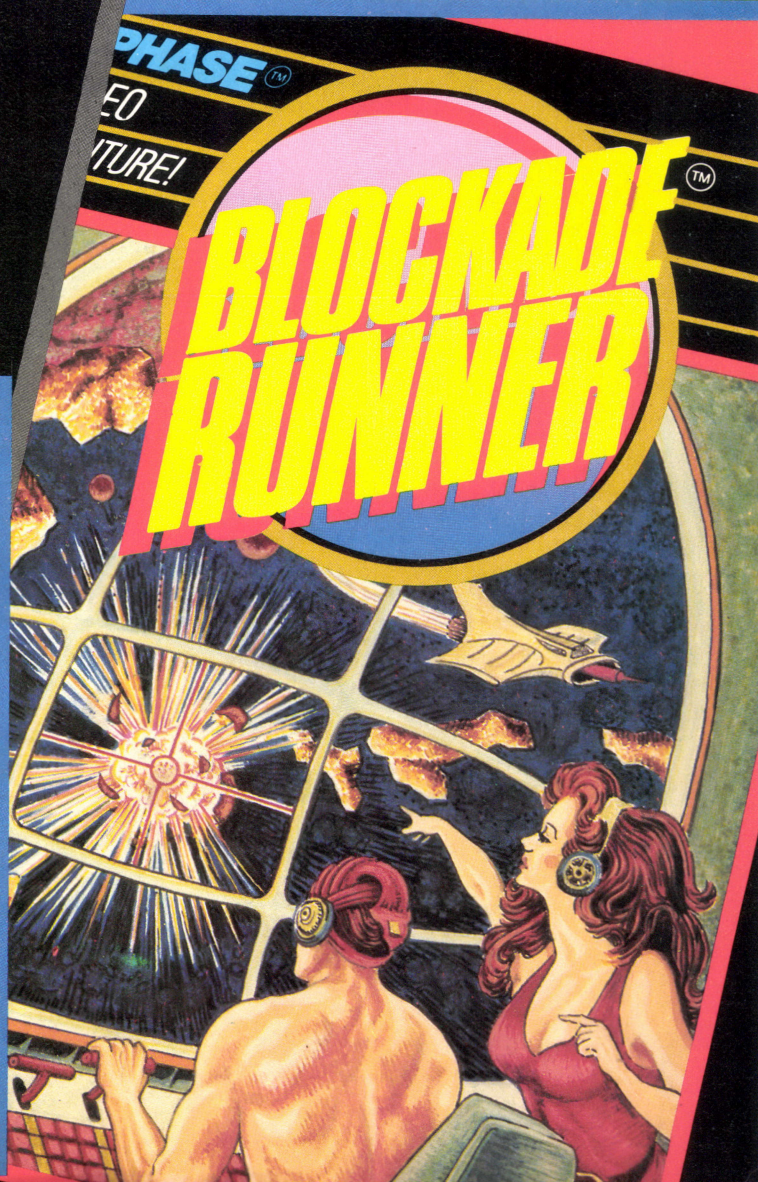

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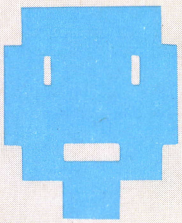


LADY BUG ★★★

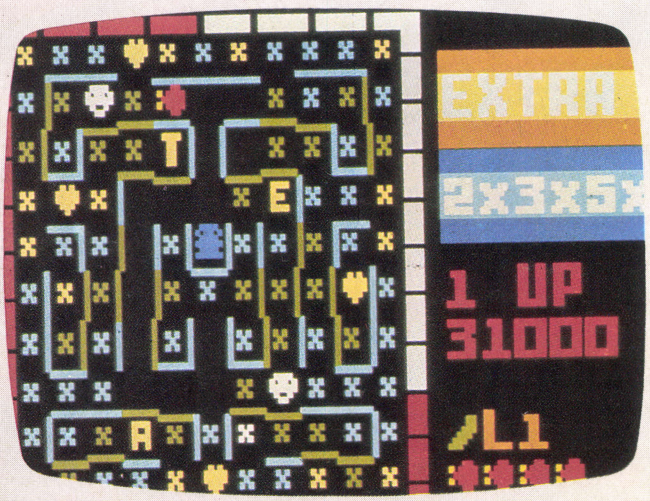
Coleco/Intellivision

By Scooter Evans

At last Intellivision owners can have the pleasure of meeting one of the greatest dames of games: that insatiable yet demure *Lady Bug*. They'll learn what arcaders and ColecoVision owners have known for a long time: *Lady Bug* is a game with bite! Unfortunately, in this version, a few teeth are missing.

The object is elegantly simple. The *Lady Bug*, controlled by your disc, travels through a maze of walls and turnstiles eating small dots, hearts and letters and avoiding predatory enemy insects.

Easy, huh? No, Ma'am! The dots may be eaten at anytime, but in order to increase your score by two, three or five times, her Bugship must eat the hearts only when they're blue (that's right, they change color).



To make things even more harrowing, she should only eat letters when they're yellow, so she can spell out EXTRA and thereby win extra Lady Bugs—all the while avoiding the nasty enemy bugs which increase in speed with the maze level, and watching out for deadly skulls which are strewn randomly around each maze.

At the start of each round, the Lady Bug is alone in the maze to graze where she will; the nasty enemy bugs are trapped in a box in the center. But as the seconds tick by, the bugs crawl out to hunt our heroine. When all of the bugs are released, a vegetable appears in the box, which may be eaten by our Gal for extra points. How many different vegetables and maze levels there are is one of the videophile's great imponderables.

This Intellivision version is a little disappointing. The game play is the same as other versions, as is the tuneful *Lady Bug* theme, but the graphics are decidedly inferior. Our Lady of the Perpetual Dots has lost her sweet, round figure and pert white lips, and here resembles a moldy strawberry more than the bug we know and love. The hearts look like U's with a weight problem and the deadly skulls smirk like Happy Faces on a bad day.

But worst of all, the Intellivision *Lady Bug* has no Special Harvest, the delectable extra screen ColecoVision players enjoy. One more thing: It's difficult to maneuver her with the Intellivision controllers. ColecoVision's were no great shakes, but the Mattel discs make it even harder to zip through a turnstile in a hurry. Still, for *Lady Bug* addicts, a klutzy Lady Bug is better than no Lady Bug at all.

> Close the turnstiles nearest the opening of the enemy bugs' box first so they can only travel on predictable paths. Also, try to eat all the dots around the box before the first bug is released.

FROGGER ★★★

Parker Brothers/Intellivision

By Marc Berman

What can one say about a legend that hasn't already been said? This green glamourpuss jumped out of the arcades and into our hearts—and here he is again in yet another format—Intellivision.

The amorous amphibian looks pretty much the same as he tour-jetes through traffic. It helps to have played the arcade version, if only so your imagination can embellish the rudimentary graphics on display here.

The concept has retained its freshness through this rehash, (unlike frogs which go bad in rehash unless you add them immediately before serving). You still have to lead the leapers to the home bays, accumulating points and avoiding hazards along the way. Most of the hazards are familiar—cars and trucks, alligators and snakes—but there is one new danger to keep you on your toes (or flippers). Beware the swimming otters! They can pluck your croaker right off the end of the log. Bonus points are awarded for speedy arrival at the home bays, for eating flies, and for jumping on the pink frog whose gender is indeterminable but who we can only assume is female (Hello, Moral Majority?).

All four levels of difficulty are entertaining, and none is too arduous for even the littlest tadpole. At levels one and two, you can float your frog off one side of the screen and he'll reappear on the other. Snakes and otters join the fray on the harder levels. Traffic patterns automatically change and hazards become more numerous as you fill each set of five bays.

The graphics are more colorful than a lockerful of jockeys, but you may need a guide to tell what's what. The cars are identifiable insofar as they travel along the road, but the otter—well, they could be mistaken for

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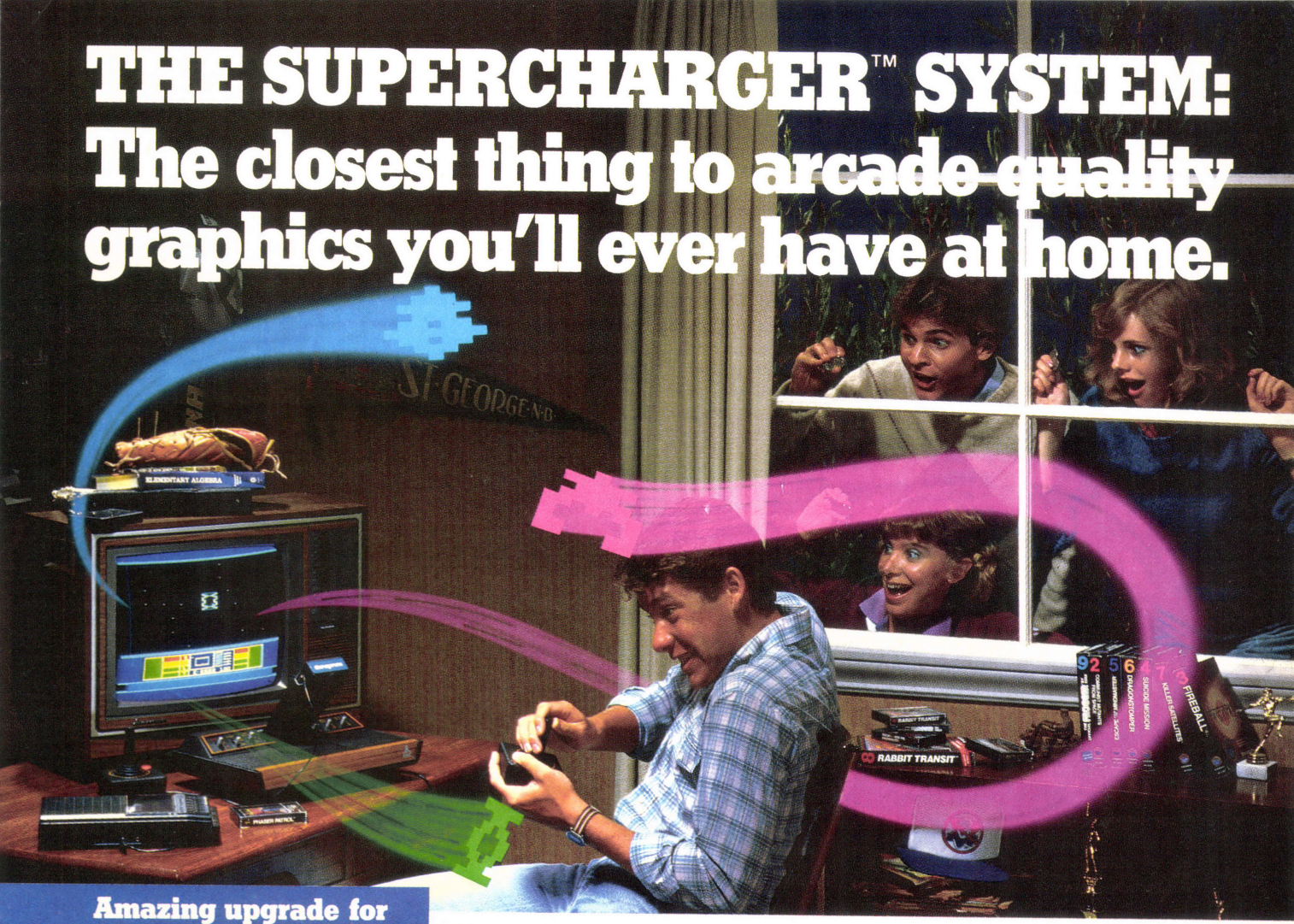

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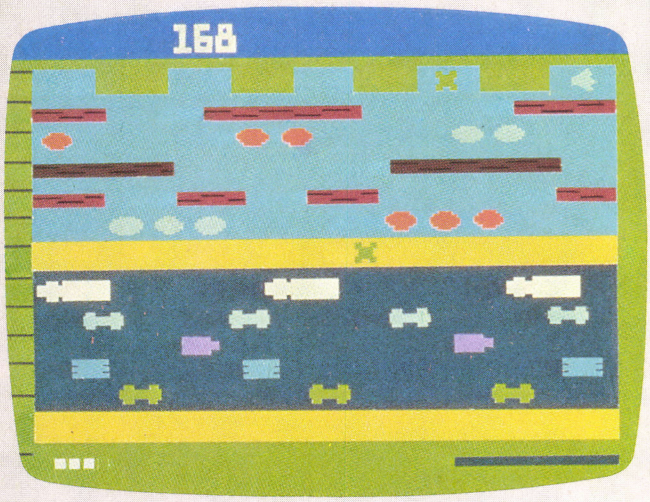


any number of unsavory floating objects commonly found in urban waterways.

Prodding your frog into action can be a frustrating affair, and all of Calaveras County couldn't help you here. The problem is the disc which controls forward and sideways movement. It's not the most precise way to keep this croaker out of harm's way. Many a frog has suffered a watery death while this player skated around the disc, searching for the pressure point.

But, all told, this is still a great game. Intellivision's limitations aside, a legend's greatness will still shine through, and this long-legged star is no exception. So, next time someone says, "What becomes a legend most?"—tell them, "Garlic butter."

If a snake is closing in on you, it's possible to jump on a brown turtle, providing you jump immediately onto a log afterwards. This double-jump technique will keep you from drowning when the turtles dive.

STAR CASTLE ★★★★

GCE/Vectrex

By Marc Berman

Star Castle is a fabulous game. Like its arcade parent it calls for strategy, quick thinking, fast action and precision.

Why it's called *Star Castle* is a mystery because you never see a castle. What you do see is a laser cannon surrounded by three revolving walls. Destroy the walls with your highly maneuverable star cruiser and blast the cannon.

Energy bombs are launched from the walls. They will track down your cruiser and destroy it unless you blast them first or thrust off the screen. Once you open a line of fire to the cannon, it will begin to shoot fireballs at you. Don't bother trying to shoot them down—they're indestructible. Your only chance is to thrust off the screen.

Another thing about the walls: When all eight sections of a wall are destroyed, new walls form around the cannon. So your best bet is to leave at least one section of each wall intact, or else you'll find yourself back where you started.

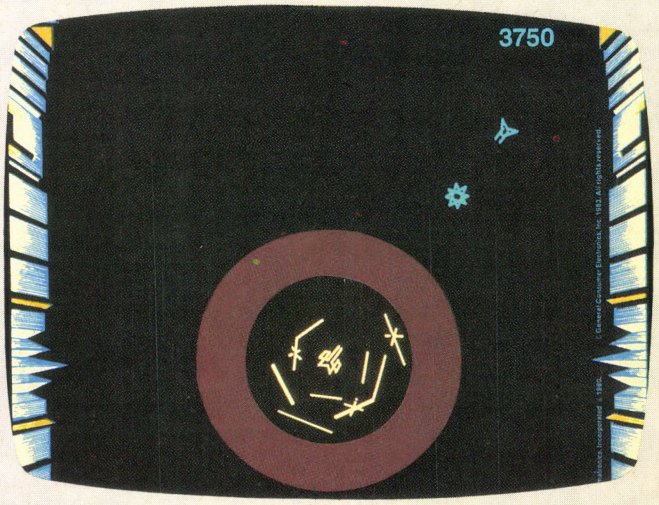
Vectrex gives you a choice. You can control the rotation of your cruiser either with a joystick or with "left" and "right" buttons on the control panel. I prefer the joystick because thrust and firing are controlled by buttons. Too many buttons slow me down and this is a game in which he who hesitates is lost.

Aim is crucial here, so you may want to discard the overlay. Unless viewed from exactly head-on, the red and yellow rings of the overlay create a sort of parallax effect. And the action is so riveting you don't want anything to get in your way.

There are two levels of difficulty for one or two players. You start off with five cruisers each, but win extra cruisers each time you cream the cannon. Points are awarded for each section of wall destroyed.

The catchy little fanfare at the beginning of the game is the only "cute" thing you'll see or hear. From then on it's pure action. Since the arcade game was vector designed, very little graphic detail is lost in this home translation.

Overall, *Star Castle* is like a Daytona stock car—stripped down, as it is, it may not look like much, but boy, can it perform.



If you shoot from the corners of the screen, the energy bombs tend to linger in your line of fire. It's better to destroy them that way than to thrust away and have to aim all over again.

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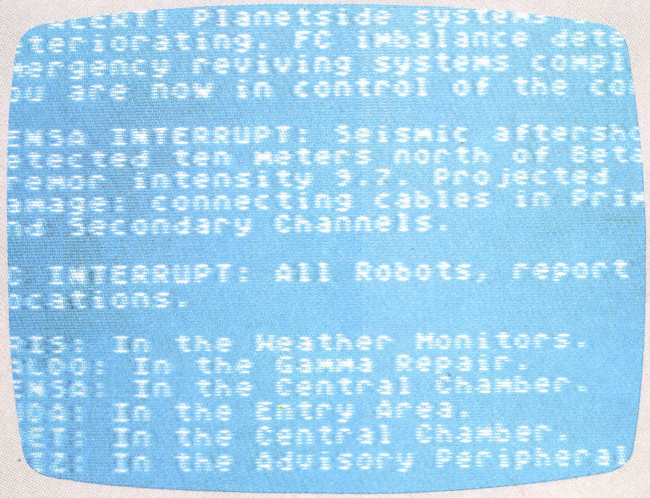


SUSPENDED ♪♪♪♪

Infocom/Atari 400/800

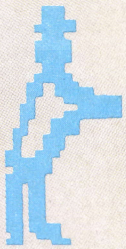
By Jim Gasperini

Michael Berlyn, author of *Oo-Topos* and *Cyborg*, has given computer fiction a new twist in his first all-text adventure game since switching to Infocom. Where most adventures grant you only one electronic proxy for exploring a fictional environment, *Suspended* gives you six—robots of varying abilities which must be coordinated and set to averting the disasters facing the planet Centra.

As a citizen of Centra, you have the dubious honor of being chosen to act as Central Mentality for 500 years. Robots and computers control the surface transit, weather and food production systems from an underground complex, until an earthquake damages the computers. Awakening from suspended animation, you must send your robots scurrying to locate the problems and fix them, while taxis crash and blizzards rage on the planet's surface.

The devices and information you need are scattered all over the complex, however, and the idiosyncratic personalities of your robots take some getting used to. What Iris, your seeing robot, may recognize as a "red chip" your fix-it robot Waldo may only call a "bumpy object." Auda, who is "all ears," can't tell you a thing about it unless it makes a noise. Poet will compose an elaborate, grandiloquent description and Sensa will inform you about its electrical field, but only if you take it to Whiz and have him question the Central Library Core will you learn what the object is and get a suggestion as to how to use it.

While you're learning how to suit the robot to the task and send them off on exploratory errands as efficiently as possible, people are dying by the thousands



on the planet's surface. If you're too slow about it, what Auda perceives as "talking mechanisms" will arrive to replace you with a clone of yourself—and the game begins anew.

The many excellent features one has come to expect from Infocom are all incorporated: full sentence and synonym recognition, extensive vocabulary and SAVE/RESTORE. Mapping the complex is unnecessary since a handsome diagram has been provided, with stick-on markers to help you remember where you've sent each robot.

Suspended does not demand as many great intuitive leaps as other Infocom productions, but learning to coordinate the robots and interpret their perceptions can be just as frustrating and just as fun. You have to earn the full descriptions that other games give you as a matter of course. Though the writing can stray a bit to the cute side, and in a few spots only one way of phrasing a command seems to work, Berlyn has done a great job of preparing a fully detailed, consistent fictional universe with a plot of deepening complexity. What happened to the seventh robot? Why did your predecessor as Central Mentality, one Gregory Franklin, choose to attempt to sabotage the entire system? As your robot Poet might say, "All the world's a computer game, and we are but robots in it."

HIGH RISE ♪♪♪

MicroLearn/Apple

By Randi Hacker

Being an architect is sort of a romantic profession. You get to construct tall buildings that (if you're lucky) will become landmarks or (if you're luckier) will later have giant apes affixed to the top and in this way guarantee you a place in skyline history. You also get to draw nifty little building plans with tiny numbers and cryptic symbols representing windows and doors. But you can't make up those numbers. They've got to be precise and exact or else your building will fall down when the mayor cuts the ribbon at the Grand Opening. This is where all the fun goes out of architecture. Fortunately, *High Rise* requires no intricate blueprints. It's all the fun of architecture without any of the drudgery.

In it you are an energetic little builder wearing white coveralls and sporting a rakish white cap. Your purpose in this life is to place different sized blocks one on top of another until they reach the height specified by the computer. Although there is no actual measuring, you do have to gauge the sizes of the blocks to be sure they will balance or else the whole structure will crumble before your very eyes and embarrass you in front of all

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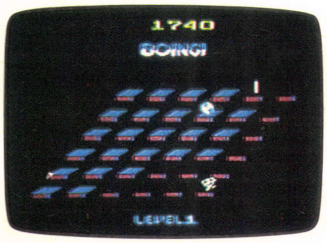

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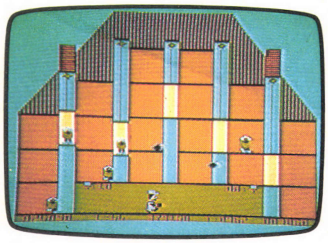

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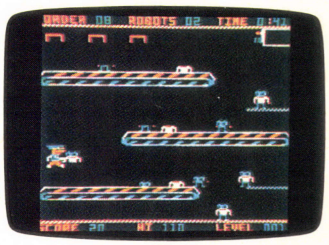

PANIC BUTTON™

TRS-80 Color Computer by Paul Kanevsky

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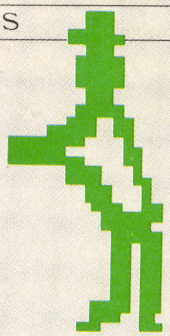


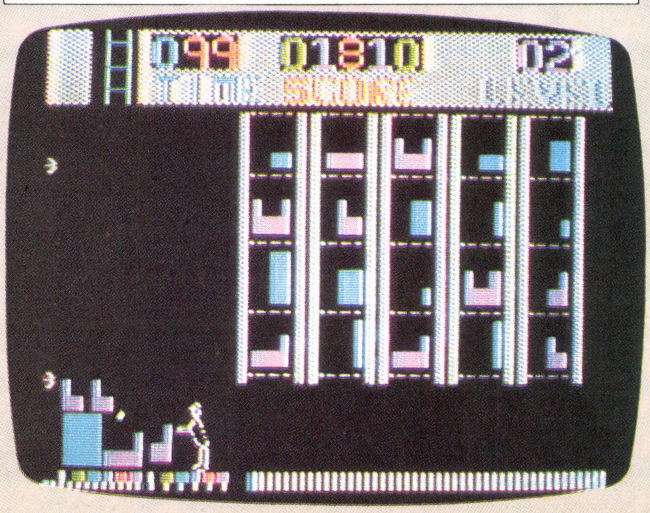
your subcontractors.

The building materials are stored in a grid at the right side of the screen. Stationing yourself beneath the column in which the block you want appears, you push the Return key and the block falls at your feet. You then push it to the catapult site at the left and press the space bar and it jumps to the construction site. Each subsequent block can either be placed on top of the block before or right next to it. Blocks are randomly stacked in the grid and range from square, solid, reliable ones to thin, spindly, unpredictable ones. Your placement of the blocks on the tower can be very precise depending on where you position them on the catapult.

At first you will try to always pick up the solid, pillar-of-society blocks with which to build your entire building. This makes sense as you certainly don't want either your whole building or bits of it to fall down and hit innocent passersby which can result in messy lawsuits. As you become more accomplished, though, you will find that you can do some pretty skillful balancing acts by starting out with a stable foundation and then placing skinny blocks at either side of the base and balancing thicker blocks on top of them. Not only will this give you a feeling of accomplishment, it will also result in buildings which are more aesthetically pleasing and which rival even those designed by, say, Frank Lloyd Wright.

The graphics are colorful and a pleasure to look at and the game play is very absorbing. Although this is slated for younger children, older ones will also find it a very intriguing balancing act.

If you've only got a choice of skinny blocks, take two or three of them at a time to the catpult before you flip them onto the building.



CALL TO ARMS ///

Sirius Software/IBM PC

By Hartley G. Lesser

Europe... 1942. A time of conflict, of treaties, and resolve. *Call to Arms*, a strategy game from Sirius Software for the IBM PC, gives you the opportunity to conquer Europe. Two to four players (any number of which may be computer controlled) may battle, country by country, until Europe falls to the victor. This accomplishment is no small feat.

To play *Call to Arms* on the IBM PC, PC-DOS must be loaded first, followed with a call for BASICA, after which *CTA* is loaded and run. The similarity to the board game *Risk* is immediately noticeable. With *CTA*, however, you can choose not only Europe as the battleground, but also Scotland, as that country appeared in 1750. The initial distribution of the countries to the players may be automatically or randomly assigned by the computer, or a saved game can be recalled for player conclusion.

Each country, or Scottish province, has a Defense Factor. This equates into extra armies. For example, Denmark has a DF of 0.50, Spain a 0.75. A new turn calculates the total number of extra armies a player possesses by adding together the DF value of each country the player controls. This figure is stored in the player's Defense Pool. Such additional strength may be allocated to any particular country, or countries, the player feels needs the support. If the player possessed both Denmark and Spain, there would be an extra 1.25 armies to distribute on the screen's high-resolution map. The more countries owned, the better the player's reinforcement factor.

There is also something called a Resistance Factor, which adds to this game's enjoyment. The player has several countries that are extremely loyal to his or her side at the start of the game. If your opponent(s) prove victorious in one of these territories, resistance by underground patriots commences. Your enemy could well find armies lost to these valiant heroes—even while he or she commands that area.

Call to Arms is one of the better games seen for the IBM PC. The instructions for loading and playing the game are not specific regarding which disk operating system to use. Both PC-DOS 1.1 and 2.0 were tested, loading in BASICA as instructed. The game only operated in the 1.1 environment. Thought is a prerequisite for success, and the computer is one tough adversary.

Don't become too greedy too quickly. Not only do you have to swallow what you bite off... you also have to keep it down.

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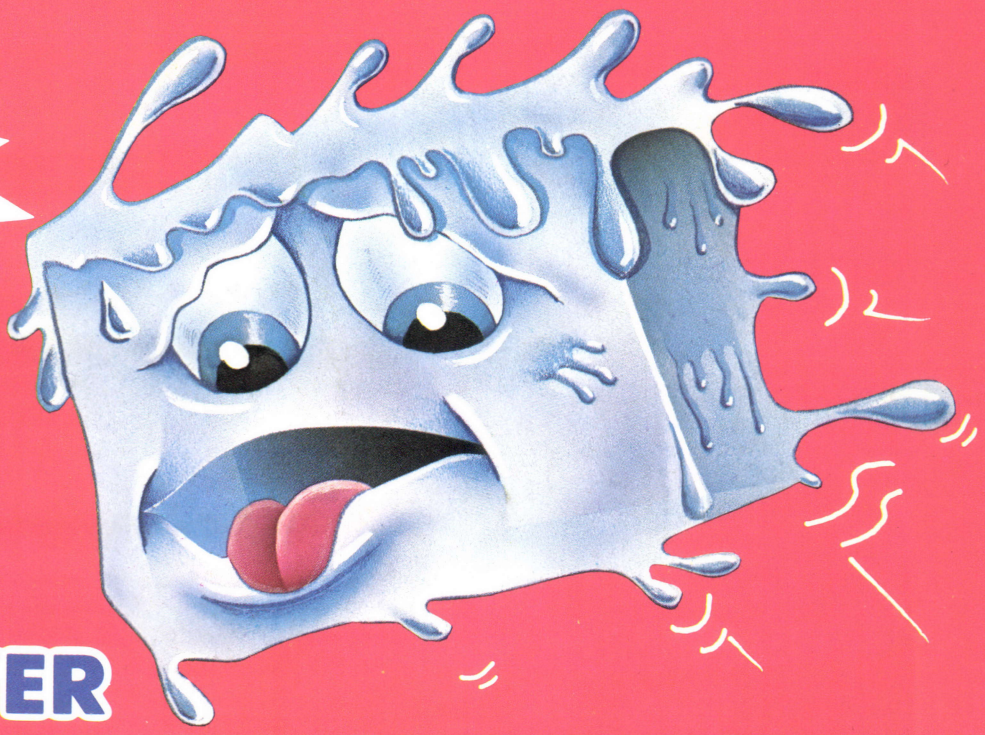

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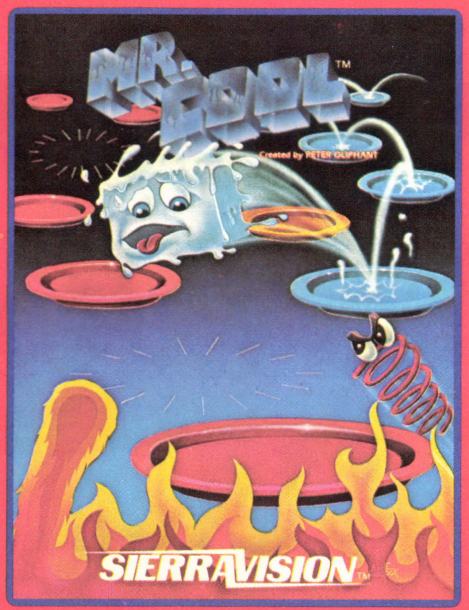
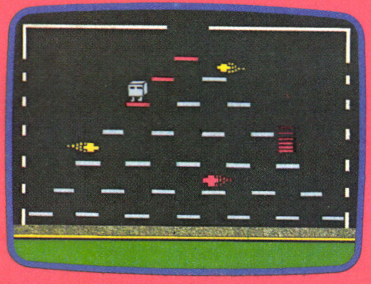
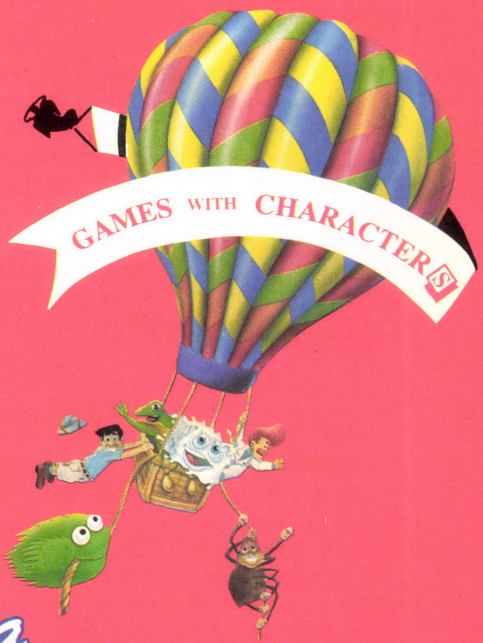
The ice cube cometh - Mr. Cool, the hottest star to ever bounce around the pyro-pyramid. Flaming fireballs blaze a menacing trail as Mr. Cool chills the 28 plates in the pyro-pyramid. Hot springs follow his every move through the inferno. One touch by either and he's just another puddle. It takes quick flicks of your wrist and a touch of SuperCool to survive. Join Mr. Cool in fast-paced action that will have you bubbling over with excitement!







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THE BILESTOAD ♪♪♪♪

Datamost/Apple II

By William Michael Brown

D&D fanatics, wargame and martial arts freaks, chess masters and fantasy/science fiction fans, lend me your ears. If you've been holding out for a computerized role-

playing game that combines really tough tactical/strategic challenge with stunning graphics, haunting sound effects, and a truly creative fantasy storyline, then *Bilestoad* is your dream monster. Quite simply, *Bilestoad* is a beautiful, bloodthirsty, uncompromising new standard in the role-playing genre.

The Bilestoad (phonetic German, meaning "Axe Death") itself is an arena/network containing 44 nearly bare islands, the whole composing a kind of nightmarish "amusement" park where the bored and angry citizens of a bleak 25th Century work off their frustrations via remote-controlled gladiatorial combat. Hooked up by computer to an endless supply of armoured, shield-and-battleaxe-wielding androids called "meatlings," they either take each other on in equal contests in the two-player version, or battle a succession of similarly armed but super-intelligent robot warriors.

A battleaxe is an extremely nasty weapon, and *Bilestoad*'s on-screen depiction of the damage it can do is realistic to a fault: sparks fly as axes bite through dented metal, you hear bones crunching, see blood spilling, heads rolling, and torn limbs littering the field. Along with a strong stomach, you'll need plenty of practice to make a good fighter: Controlling your meatling's movement, facing and use of shield and axe involve nine keyboard commands and your paddle button. Three different radar screens (in addition to the main overhead view) track your and your opponent's positions on the island, as well as the locations of the "Shyben"—magic power points that can teleport you around the island, send you skimming across it at high speed, or let you escape your opponent entirely (and thus win a round). It is these Shyben that make the game much more than a realistic simulation of a peculiarly barbaric form of combat. Without going into their complexities, knowing where the Shyben are, how to exploit them, and how to avoid being forced into combat before you can get to them is the whole key to the game.

But whether you play on this strategic level or just hack away, *Bilestoad* is a unique experience. The animation of characters is spectacular, the sound effects are equally well done (they include a rather foreboding rendition of Beethoven's *Fur Elise* piano theme, keyed to player movements), and the gameplay is an outstanding blend of adventure/strategy themes and unprecedented combat realism. Whoever the psuedonymous author of *Bilestoad* is ("By Mangrove Earthshoe?" Come on!), he's a designer to watch.

Use the escape key to halt the game and make maps of each new island.

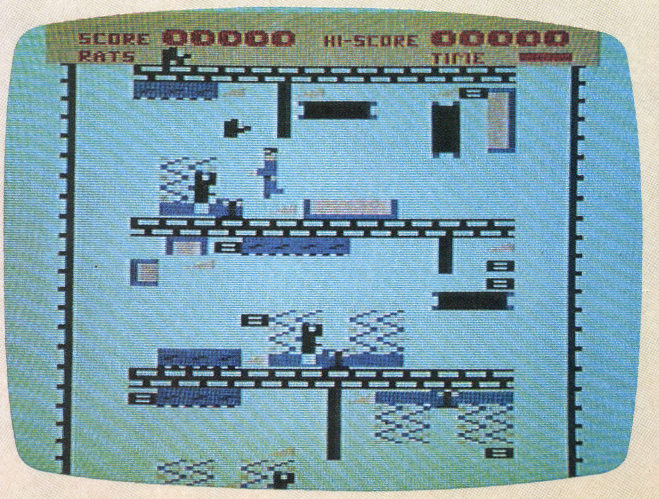
RAT HOTEL ♪♪♪

Creative Software/VIC-20

By Art Levis

He's no Tony Perkins, but weird Waldo has enough terrifying tricks up his sleeve to make you wish you'd stayed at home. Stolid Waldo, the maintenance man at the seedy Hotel Paradiso, is an unsubtle brute who tramps the hotel's hallways in search of rats.

Since the player is a rat, the object is to avoid Waldo's traps (and Waldo himself), nibble up little bits of cheese and other goodies hidden in dingy, dark



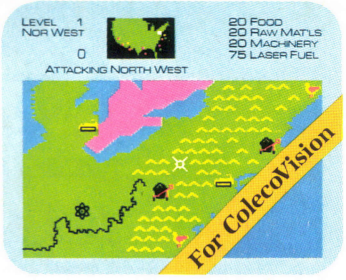
Play the game the generals play... for real.

WAR ROOM

Feel the goose bumps on your neck begin to rise as you take your seat in front of the video monitor. The situation pictured before your eyes is critical. Actual enemy nuclear attack on your most important cities and natural resources has begun.

Only *you* can determine the best strategic defense of the nation. Only *you* can effectively repel the enemy attack.

But the situation worsens. As you're attempting to rebuild your cities and keep production of goods and services going, you pick up enemy spies lurking within your midst on your video close-up monitor. Can you effectively deal with them...even as more enemy missiles are approaching?



Your time is running out.

It's WAR ROOM. The new high-technology Probe 2000 strategy game for the ColecoVision™ game system. The game that's so realistic, generals might even play it.

Isn't it time you tested your skills?

PROBE 2000 series

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corners of each floor, then escape via elevator to the next floor for more of the same.

It sounds easy enough, but with me at the joystick helm, the rat checked in but didn't check out. Even though I once successfully captured the cheese on five separate floors, Waldo finally wore me down, trapping me as I anxiously awaited an elevator, then simply stomped on my head. Rats!

Waldo, a sort of Germanic Odd Job, also has a secret weapon. While the rat can only descend one floor at a time, Waldo has an atomic elevator at his disposal and can whisk himself to any floor he chooses.

And therein lies his secret. During the course of a game, Waldo waltzes off screen for relatively longer periods of time (tending the boiler, killing other rats, kidnapping small children?), lulling the player into a false sense of security. Then, like the maddened killer from *Halloween*, he suddenly elevates himself to the player's floor, stalks the rat into a corner and... I can't go on.

The game's sound effects heighten the tension. Though the rat's movements are accompanied by all the usual beeps and bleeps we've come to expect, his demise is greeted by Waldo's sadistic, low-throated laughter. *Rat Hotel*'s graphics are decent, but better definition of the rat himself could help; he looks more like an amorphous blob of protoplasm than a rodent.

Don't venture too near the little traps which often lurk near the tiny pieces of cheese. Tripping the traps takes only the merest brush and, when that happens, it's back to the front desk and another encounter with Waldo.

THUNDERBOMBS II

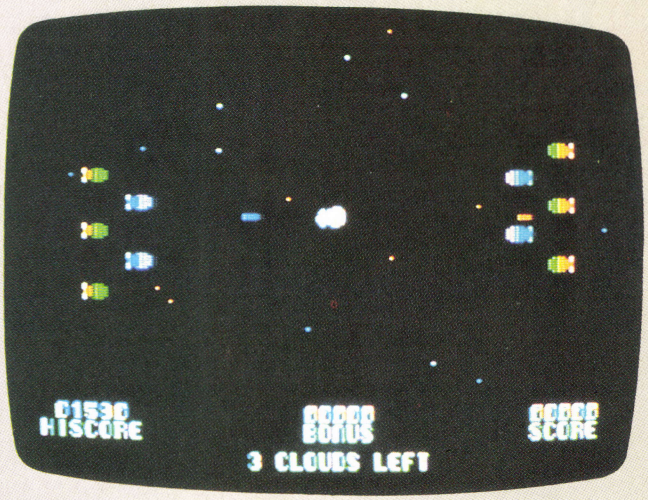
Penguin/Apple

By Michael Blanchet

With all the memory and computing power afforded by a home computer, one would think that a game designer with all that RAM and ROM at his fingertips could devise a game better than those we've played on a simple dedicated console. One look at *Thunderbombs*, though, indicates that the ranks of software designers are more technician than storyteller. All the essential elements are there but they have not been used to the full.

Like a disappointingly large number of currently available computer games, *Thunderbombs* takes its cue from an old arcade machine. In this case the premise shows a strong *Space Invaders* influence. Again I ask—How long do game companies think the gaming public wants to play silly rehashes of *Space Invaders*?

To say this game is a complete clone would be a bit unfair since it does make good use of one piece of



imaginative programming. Instead of a land-locked bunker, the player controls a cloudship which slides along a vertical axis at center screen. Your enemies attack on two fronts—one on the left, the other to the right. True to the *Invaders* format, each squadron moves side to side (actually up and down) dropping down one notch closer to the player's ship each time the northern or southern borders are reached.

To stop this mechanized onslaught, the player must fire in not one, but two directions. To end any given round you must destroy not only all of the enemy ships on both sides of the screen, but the droneclone replenishers as well. The *Thunderbombs* equivalent of the *Invader*'s UFO, these guys appear briefly for a trip along the outer edges of the screen.

You are given three modes of control to choose from. The most effective means by far is the keyboard. The A and Z keys control ship movement (up and down respectively) while the arrow keys fire in their respective directions. In the keyboard mode you are able to fire in both directions simultaneously. With either the Apple or Atari joysticks you can't—the controller must be pointing in the direction you wish to fire.

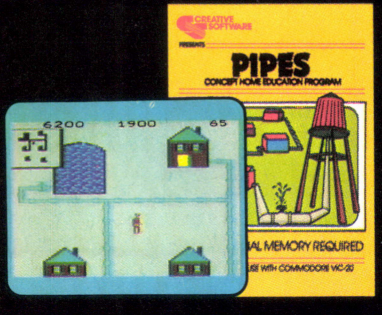
Initially, I found *Thunderbombs* quite challenging. Since the attack is coming from two sides, your attention is divided between both halves of the screen. This game strikes a good balance between challenge and healthy frustration. As novel as this two-front idea is, though, the whole charade wears thin very quickly.

Some quirks I noticed tipped the scales in favor of your computer controlled opponents. For one thing, your ship can only cover two-thirds of the screen. Your adversaries, on the other hand, have full run of the playfield. The smattering of stars that cover the background is also most annoying. On the Apple monitor it is difficult to differentiate between a harmless space body and a live enemy shell.

Nice try, fellas, but I think the audience is ready for something a little less hackneyed and a bit more stimulating.

Play in the keyboard mode—this way you can fire in both directions simultaneously.

HELP WANTED:



Arlo is a hard-working plumber, but a touch absent-minded. He's building a water supply system for the whole neighborhood, and he really has his hands full. Help Arlo decide what kind of pipe to buy and where to put it... his limited budget doesn't leave him much margin for error. Figure out the shortest, most economical way to get everyone hooked up... and just hope poor Arlo has remembered to open and close the right valves. A marvelously entertaining and challenging exercise in planning, economics and spatial relationships for all ages.

PIPES. For the VIC-20 and Commodore 64.

C R E A T I V E S O F T W A R E

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KICKMAN ♪♪♪

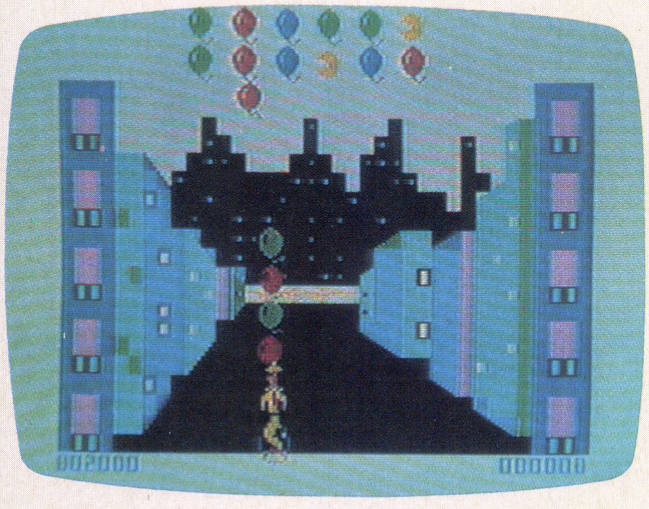
Commodore/Commodore 64

By Charles Ardai

What goes up must come down, or so goes the old adage. The people at Midway took this saying to heart when they made the *Kickman* arcade game, in which you play a unicyclist attempting to catch helium balloons as they drop from the sky. Commodore must have liked the underlying theme of *Kickman* too, and has dutifully reproduced it.

Aside from using a joystick to maneuver (as opposed to a trackball in the arcades), the gameplay is a very good replica of its arcade predecessor. Your unicyclist can be moved horizontally along the bottom of the screen, and must be maneuvered into position under each falling balloon. In the first round, any balloons that hit your pointy hat pop automatically. In later screens, the balloons pile up on top of your hat, making catching balloons more difficult. If any balloons fall past your hat, and are within reach, pressing the fire button will kick them skyward, giving you another chance.

Undoubtedly, the game's most popular feature is that in later screens Pac-Man and his infamous "ghost monsters" appear mixed in among the balloons—



catching them gives you extra points. If you catch a Pac-Man on top of a stack of balloons, it will eat them all, giving you bonus points. In this game, Pac-Men can eat anything, but you get no bonus for balloons (or ghosts) which slide down into its mouth.

Kickman's major problem is that it is too repetitive. The screen never changes, and the action, though it speeds up, is never very difficult. By some quirk of the C-64, whenever a balloon goes in front of the black skyline, it almost disappears, making spotting it very frustrating. Though the balloons fall in no preset order, by simple observation, it is easy to predict which balloon will fall next.

The *Kickman* arcade game was never a big hit, but even it was better than this. Commodore *Kickman* is too complex for younger kids, and is too dull for anyone over 9 years old. I can't recommend this game to anyone, but especially not to all you *Kickman* fans. After all, you have the highest expectations for the home game, and I wouldn't want you to have your balloon burst.

Stay near the center and use the kick function.

SUPER NOVATRON ♪♪♪

Fast-N-Fun Video/IBM PC

By Hartley Lesser

While the speed and heart-thumping excitement of the light cycles sequence from the movie *Tron* have yet to be brought home *in toto* for personal computers, *Super Novatron* certainly comes close. Just like the film, the object of the game is to enclose your opponent with a wall that you build on the run. The wall-building also takes place just as it does in the movie, that is, the leading edge of the wall speeds along in whatever direction you have decided it should travel.

You battle either your ex-best friend or the computer on a playing field that nearly fills your screen. The graphics feature a three-dimensional perspective that is most effective at the start of the wall construction, but beware of this effect toward the end of the game—each wall begins to blend with itself at this stage, and you have to watch your movements carefully to avoid trapping yourself. The walls start at either the right or left side of the screen and.

Trying to encompass your foe is no easy feat—a fact that is even more obvious when your foe is the computer. Winning two games in a row will raise your difficulty level automatically, via higher speed factors and a larger number of opposing walls. Each time you jump a level, a new playing field is constructed atop the old one—a really stupendous player will soon find several "decked" playing fields on the screen. You'll have to be stupendous to see that, though, as the difficulty level jumps are almost unfair.

The three skill levels also include superfast-speed and sound/no-sound options. The sound version even allows a voice to name the winner of each round (a voice that sounds much less than impartial when the computer is the winner, I might add).

Your wall's left and right are much more important than your left or right.

MONTY PLAYS SCRABBLE ♪♪♪♪

Ritam/Apple

by Randi Hacker

As the title implies, Monty does indeed play Scrabble and, what's more, he's good. He's very good. Not only does he know an alarming number of Scottish variations, he's also the first opponent this Scrabble fiend has ever played who added an "a" in front of "by" and still came up with a legal word.

Monty Plays Scrabble is a wonderful program. You can play a complete game at any level from Beginner to Scholar. At the Beginner level, Monty takes his turn quickly, using familiar words that just about everyone knows. At the Scholar level, Monty ruminates a long time before putting down any of his tiles. He goes through all the possible words in his hand and then assesses the board structure and decides where to put them and which will bring him the highest score. He can tuck those X's into corners and get 51 points using just one letter. He's an ace. In addition, he knows more obscure words than any etymologist and doesn't hesitate to use them. If you should get tired of waiting for Monty, ESCAPE brings him back.

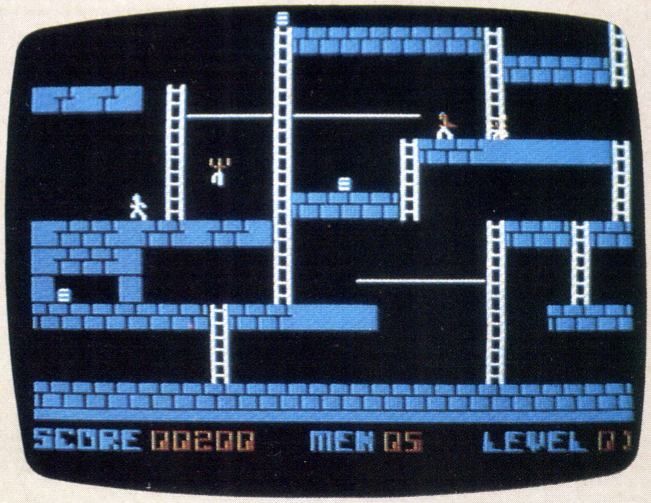
Monty is a very polite player as well. He doesn't continually peek at the score and sigh or make rude noises if he's losing. In fact, he compliments you every time you score above 15 points. If you manage to put down all seven of your tiles, Monty fairly raves, telling you that it was a "very great play" and then comes out with a tinny rendition of the *1812 Overture*.

Monty will always play by your rules using the dictionary you have in hand. If he plays a word that doesn't appear in your Webster's, you can challenge him. If you're correct, Monty graciously regrets his error and skips his turn. No pouting or complaints.

Although you can beat Monty fair and square, don't try to cheat by putting down a word that isn't legitimate. If you do, a graphic of Monty will appear, shake his head sadly and tell you to check that word. You can cheat here, though. When Monty asks you if the word is legal, you can type "yes" even if it's not and Monty will accept your decision. But *you* have to live with that.

And, Monty keeps track of everything from the scores to the word placement on the board to the number of tiles left. You don't have to do anything except play, and believe me, at the advanced levels, this will take up all your time.

Try not to use the ESCAPE key unless you're in a real rush. This gives you an unfair advantage over Monty.



LODE RUNNER ♪♪♪

Broderbund/Apple

By Michael Blanchet

Some games, like old sitcoms and certain foods, never go away—they just get resurrected and repackaged under the guise of a new title. At first glance, *Lode Runner* seems to be a perfect example of that phenomenon: a mishmash of elements.

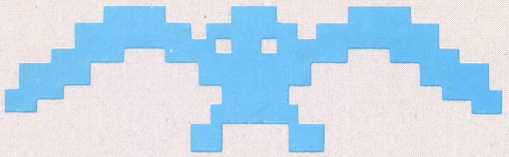
But while *Lode Runner* begs, borrows and steals from a number of old faves, don't write it off. Although it might have been a fairly mediocre game all by itself, *Lode Runner* also includes a playfield-generator feature that takes it far beyond the run-of-the-mill climber.

First, the basic game: Cast as a Galactic Commando, your mission is to infiltrate a series of 150 treasury rooms, locating and retrieving boxes of booty from each of them. Every room is guarded by the usual bad guys, here called Bungelings, and each room is divided into levels. The levels are in turn connected by a network of ladders and by horizontal bars.

The gameplay is standard stuff: Run over every gold box you can get to while dodging the guards by running, climbing and using the horizontal bars. You don't carry any real offensive weapons, but you do have a laser drill/pistol. When fired at one of the brick surfaces on the playfield, this device creates a hole. Any Bungeling who then happens on this trap will fall in and eventually die when the gap automatically fills itself on the screen.

All of this would be very ordinary, except that you can also switch into edit mode and create (and save to disk) up to 150 of your own playfield configurations. The actual design process is remarkably simple and requires no programming knowledge; you simply guide the cursor around the screen and position the nine basic shapes that comprise the standard *Lode Runner* playfield anywhere you want. Of course, your original game will play just like standard *Lode Runner*, but it will have a look of its own.

In this game you can safely jump down without harming yourself. When a quick escape is needed, jump down.



BUZZARD BAIT

Sirius/Apple

By Michael Blanchet

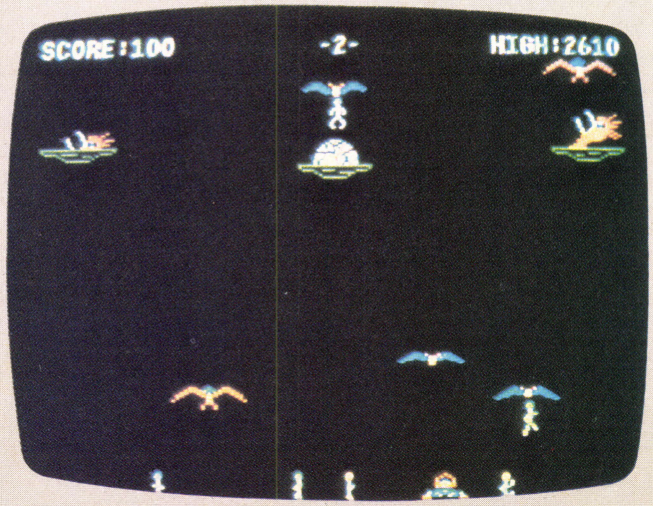
Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't buzzard bait and dead rotting flesh one and the same? If so, what we have here is a game best left for the birds.

Another tired reworking of the classic *Demon Attack* scenario, *Buzzard Bait* begins with the standard Sirius (less than serious) tongue-in-cheek storyline. According to the package prose, the town where *Buzzard Bait* takes place has a recurring missing persons problem. It seems that a bunch of buzzards have been carrying off passersby and feeding them to their young. In fact, last year those birds had such a feast this poor little town had to "change the population sign." To save this pathetic bunch you must man the municipal hovercraft and head on over to the "Old South Field." Here you'll engage not only the buzzards, but a bunch of pushy penguins as well.

Once you peel away this ridiculous facade you're left with a familiar game. To protect the townspeople you must blast the birds before they get a chance to sink their talons into anyone. This is done by sliding along the bottom of the screen. When a bird is in your sights, fire away. Once any force has been done in you are given a modest bonus based on the number of citizens remaining.

Now it's time to win a bonus ship. To do this you must maneuver through a sea of penguins in search of the parts that make up your ship. You must retrieve three such parts while avoiding the tiny mines dropped by the minelayer. This is a rather peculiar exercise that is, if nothing else, different.

Back to the Old South Field and more buzzards. In round two, things get a bit trickier. Here you'll have to watch out for the penguin. When he passes along the southern border of the screen, your only recourse is to jump over him. If you don't, he'll smash your hovercraft to pieces with his distended belly.



Visually, *Buzzard Bait* is quite a treat. Even on the phosphor green Apple monitor, the animation looks—well, like good animation. The buzzards flap their wings, the people down below scurry about in fear and everyone on the screen looks like they believe this horror is actually taking place. But graphics alone cannot carry a game. On the issue of playability, I am decidedly mixed. When any game borrows from others, the resulting compendium of concepts should, if nothing else, attempt to improve on the inspiration. *Buzzard Bait*, however, muddles along as a second rate *Demon Attack*.

When the penguin flies overhead make him a priority target. This way you won't have to jump over him when he passes along the bottom of the screen.

LEMANS

Commodore/ Commodore 64

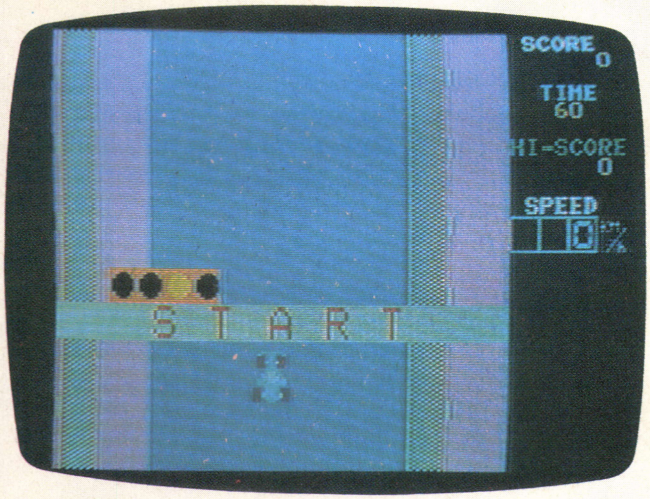
By Robert Alonso

Seeing you drive at speeds over 300 kilometers per hour may not give the state police much to smile about (their squad cars could never catch you!), but it sure will give you a good time. Fortunately, you won't have to take the family wagon and grind its engine to scrap because the designers at Commodore have put the thrill of speed racing in a computer game. Best of all, the state police won't chase you and your dad will still love you.

LeMans is a speed racing game based on an old Bally Midway coin-op of the same name. You don't get that behind-the-wheel feel that *Pole Position* gives you—instead you get a bird's-eye view of your car, the track and the cars you have to pass, and what a beautiful view it is! Unlike *RoadRace*, the poorly done racing game for the VIC-20, *LeMans* features exciting graphics with vivid colors. The track is light blue framed by a light pink and the cars come in different colors.

A black strip down the right side indicates your score, the time remaining (yes, you are timed), the high score, your present speed in kilometers per hour and a tic-tac-toe pattern of pink racers that represents the number of cars you have passed. The shape and difficulty of the track varies from a straight easy-to-follow path, to icy-white roads, to night driving to S-shaped curves. At one point the track even divides so you should constantly be on your toes.

Before the 64, Commodore's games always left the player yearning for something more; either better graphics or sound effects or even better gameplay. But happily the sins of the VIC were not visited upon the



64. *LeMans* is a quality game. Attention has been paid to detail. You can hear the sounds of roaring engines and even the crashes sound realistic.

Perhaps more important than graphics and sound is the gameplay. At the start, four lights progressing from red to green indicate your status at the start line. Once the green light comes on you step on your accelerator (the fire button) and you're off! Your ability to pass or maneuver at curves is not hindered by unresponsive controls. The paddle gives you full and instant maneuverability. If your reactions are not as swift as they should be, you crash and have to go to the pit for repairs which costs you valuable race time. You're allowed 60 seconds per race, but get extended time for every 20,000 points.

LeMans is a must for all driving fanatics. You'll save a bundle on tickets and gas and more importantly keep your car insurance premiums low.

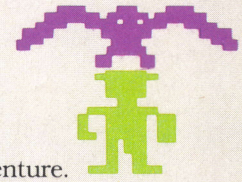
Keep to the left of the road. You'll encounter fewer cars and save race time when crashes occur because it will take less time for your car to reach the pit.

PHARAOH'S CURSE ♪♪♪

Synapse/Atari 400/800/1200

By Noel Steere

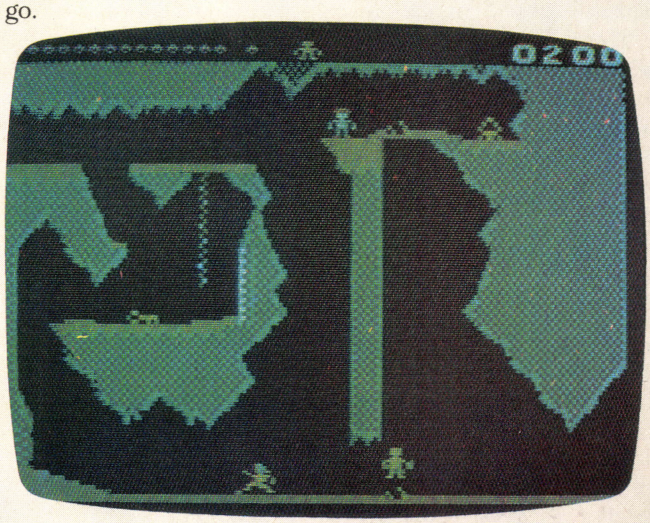
A few years ago the pyramid craze swept the country. Sharp marketers claimed that by hanging a lucite pyramid over your head you would get in tune with the cosmic vibrations and cure anything from hives to halitosis. Now the pyramids have invaded video games. We have *Q*Bert*, which just uses the pyramid's shape, *Tutankham*, which uses its legend, and now *Pharaoh's Curse*, another Indiana Jones-style scenario. While not as much of a shoot-em-up as *Tutankham*, *Pharaoh's Curse* does have its share of adventure.



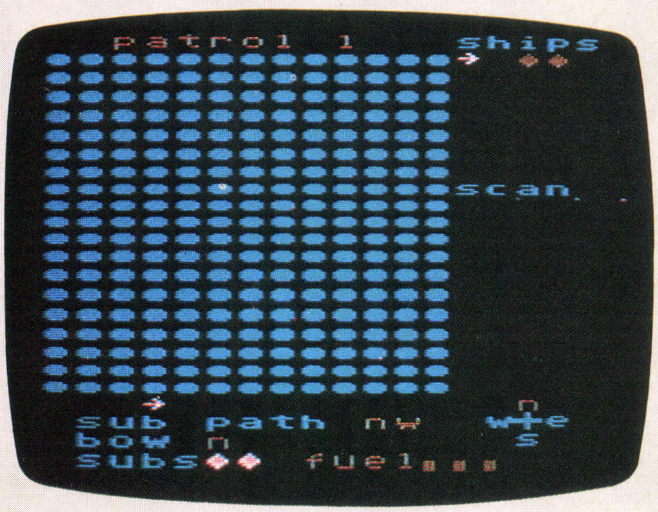
You play a grave robber (let's stop covering up for these thieves by calling them archaeologists, okay?) who ventures into a tomb that has been untouched for centuries. The tomb contains 16 rooms, and each room gets its own screen. Each room also has its own treasure, and you've got to collect all 16 before you lose all your lives. You start with two lives and get an extra one for every treasure you retrieve.

Staying alive is no easy matter. You can step on any of several traps set in the floor of almost every room (they spring open suddenly and unleash laser beams, monstrous glowing claws and other dangers), get shot by the Pharaoh's ghost or a mummy who drop in from time to time (although you can also shoot them), or get hit by an arrow which materializes out of nowhere. If you aren't careful, or spend too much time deciding which way to go, a bird known as the Winged Avenger will swoop in and carry you to another room, selected at random. As with the Pharaoh and the mummy, you can also shoot the bird.

Ropes and elevators help you get from one place to another while keys open doors to more rooms. This treasure hunt can be a frustrating experience, especially when the Winger Avenger grabs you for the hundredth time. What it lacks in gameplay, though, it makes up for in graphics. While not up to Synapse's *Necromancer* standards, *Pharaoh's Curse* is still one of the best-looking games for the Atari computers. Its main problem is that it's neither a full-fledged shoot-em-up nor a full-fledged adventure. *Pharaoh's Curse*, like its central character, doesn't seem to know which way to go.



When you step on a trap, keep moving or jump. Also, whenever you find yourself up against the Pharaoh or the mummy, shoot like crazy.



ANTI-SUB PATROL ♪♪

Roklan/Atari 400/800/1200

By Jeremy Goldstein

When I first read the instructions for *Anti-Sub Patrol*, I was mildly disappointed to find that the game was written in BASIC. I say mildly because, of course, there are other BASIC games from other companies that are still very good and very popular. But *Anti-Sub Patrol* could very well be the *Titanic* of the game software industry.

Anti-Sub Patrol is a retread of the old paper-and-pencil *Battleship* game—hunt down subs and destroy them with depth charges. Commanding your destroyer (you start with three lives), you maneuver around a grid of oval "squares," searching for one of the two subs you have to destroy to win. Whenever you want to see if you're near the sub, you press the fire button. If you're within one space of it, you go into attack mode. Choose the square and the depth at which you think the sub is located, then press the button again to fire charges.

This doesn't seem too tough until you consider the odds against you. With eight squares and three depths to choose from, you've got a one-in-24 (or roughly four percent) chance of hitting the sub. If the sub is not in your area, which is generally the case, it gets a chance to move—and if it's close enough, it can also fire a torpedo at you. This is pretty unfair since, while you have to be within one square of the sub to fire at it, the sub can be up to 10 squares away and still fire at you. The game does help by telling you the direction in which the sub is moving, but since you usually won't know where it was to start with, it's generally a case of too little, too late.

The graphics are as crude as the gameplay: BASIC just isn't an excuse for giving us a screen that uses blue ovals for spaces and red dots for ships. The best graphic effect in the game is when the torpedo, a red square, is fired and moves slowly across the screen and that's about as thrilling as a hatful of cold oatmeal.

Try to get a bearing on the sub from where it fired its last torpedo. Then track it until you're within firing range.

SPIDER CITY ♪♪♪

Sirius/Atari 400/800/1200

By Robert Alonso

New York and other large cities are hardly a driver's paradise. *Spider City* gives you Midtown with a twist. The difference between *Spider City* and, let's say, New York is that the taxis are replaced by Warriors, the vans and trucks are replaced by debris and the police cars by patrol ships. Come to think of it, it *does* sound like New York.

In *Spider City* you are in control of an advanced rocket ship. You must rescue stranded spacemen aimlessly wandering the dangerous tunnels of the city. (In New York they'd be commuters on the Canarsie Line.) Along the way you have to eliminate all the Hatching Pods as well as some Generators and Patrol Ships. You will also have to be careful not to enter a Disrupter—the odds are against your leaving one without losing a spaceship.

Playing *Spider City* is really like playing two games at once, thanks to the split-screen display. One section is maze-like and the other is almost *Defender*-like, and combined they create the game action. You see where you are in the maze and maneuver accordingly, while keeping an eye on the top of the screen to make sure that you do not hit any objects or miss any spacemen.

Once the hatching pods are eliminated you're transported into another city full of faster moving enemies.

If all this sounds a little familiar, perhaps you've played *Flash Gordon* by Fox. *Spider City* is a *Flash* clone. Still, it's a challenging game with a little more interest than your basic shoot-em-up.

Try to get the shields. They'll give you much greater flexibility in your attack.

SCREEN PLAYS

Continued from page 14

one of the bunkers, towers or trench catwalks, you lose one shield.

That emphasis on shields ought to tip you off to the basic *Star Wars* strategy: play defensively, not offensively. One unique feature of *Star Wars* is that the length of each round is determined by a definite time limit, not by the number of objects you destroy. You can, for instance, move easily from the space sequence to the bunker sequence without destroying a single Time Fighter. Obviously, where points are concerned it is in your interest to blast as many targets as possible. But remember: Your biggest bonus comes from destroying the Death Star, and you only get a shot at the Death Star if you survive everything else in the game. In the long run, you're wiser to save your shields, and thus extend your playing time and get more chances at the Death Star. Here are some tips for each sequence of the game:

In the opening sequence, position your gunsight at the top center of the screen and start firing away before any Tie Fighters appear. In most cases, this is the point where they'll enter the screen, and if you're lucky you'll take out one or two before they can get a shot off at you. In later rounds, the entry point shifts to the lower right side of the screen, and you can use the same early-fire tactic here as well. This sequence gets more difficult as the levels progress, however, and once you're in a high-level dogfight, play defensively. Unless you can ice a Tie Fighter with your first shot, forget about him and concentrate on the fireballs he's tossing at you. The round will end soon enough, so just hang in there.

Fly low during the bunker sequence. Most of the fireballs will sail right over your head if you hug the ground. Concentrate on knocking out as many bunkers as you can; their point value increases with each subsequent hit.

When the white-capped towers appear, forego the bunkers completely. Fly at medium altitude and aim for

Continued on page 92

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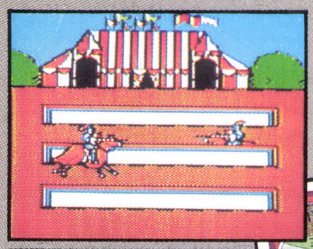

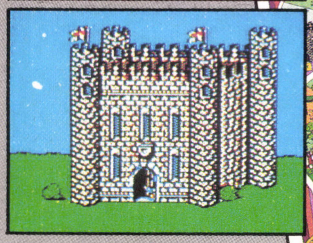

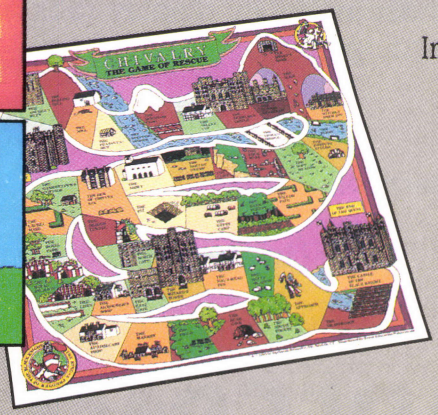

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Weekly Reader Family Software

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FIRST SCREENING

PEARL HARBOR

We're waiting to discover you. Send us a program you've written and maybe we'll send you $100—and publish it in Electronic Fun. *Be sure to include a printout, cassette or disk and your picture and to tell us which computer system it's for.*

This month's winner is 20-year-old Jerry Hunter, a draftsman in Rogers, AR. He's written Pearl Harbor *for the TI 99/4A with the Extended Basic module. Jerry hopes to "find his way" onto the IBM mainframe at his office.*

Jerry Hunter, author of PEARL HARBOR

The Game

You are in a submarine at Pearl Harbor! You alone must defend the government installation here, and eliminate as many Japanese Zeros and aircraft carriers as possible within the given time limit of the attack.

The enemy is unaware of your presence. You watch all, silently observing, until... Blast!... the right moment.

But right moments are scarce in war. If your aim is just a trifle slow, or if your reflexes are a split-second off, the Japanese take evasive action.

How To Play

Viewing through the periscope of your sub, the sight is indicated by the red 'X'-shaped object located just offshore of the main island. Joystick Controller #1 controls the movement of the sight (make sure the 'ALPHA LOCK' key is in the 'up' position) across the screen.

At first, the targets appear easily hit. But beware! Aim just one dot too high or low, or fire too soon, and the aircraft carrier will reverse its direction. A similar misfire on a Zero will result in a change in altitude *and* an almost imperceptible increase in speed. After a few misfires, the velocity increase becomes apparent, making the target even harder to hit than before.

At the bottom of the screen a timer displays the game's progress. Just above that, the score is displayed. The ships award the player 500 points when hit. The aircraft, a much more difficult target, returns 5,000 points for a direct hit.

A few tips: A lower time limit insures a more entertaining game.

Forget the clock. You set the time at the beginning, and there's no use changing it now.

Stick with the Zeros—no matter how erratic their flight pattern, they still award ten times the value of the ship.

Always fire at either the plane or the boat a few seconds early.

```
10  CALL CLEAR
15  DISPLAY AT (10,4):"
    PEARL HARBOR"
20  DISPLAY AT (12,5):"Jerry &
    Cindy Hunter"
25  FOR DELAY = 1 TO 800 ::
    NEXT DELAY :: CALL
    CLEAR
30  DISPLAY AT
    (10,4):"PLEASE ENTER
    YOUR NAME,    COM-
    MANDER:"
35  INPUT NAM$
40  CALL CLEAR
45  DISPLAY AT (10,3):"DO YOU
    NEED TO SEE THE
    DIRECTIONS, "; NAM$;"?"
50  INPUT LK$
55  IF LK$="YES" THEN 80
    ELSE 60
60  IF LK$="yes" THEN 80
    ELSE 65
65  IF LK$="Yes" THEN 80
    ELSE 70
70  IF LK$="Y" THEN 80 ELSE
    75
75  IF LK$="y" THEN 80 ELSE
    310
80  CALL CLEAR
85  DISPLAY AT (3,4):"
    PEARL HARBOR!"
90  DISPLAY AT (5,2):" Pearl
    Harbor is a strategy"
95  DISPLAY AT (6,2):"game
    based on the event"
100 DISPLAY AT (7,2):"which in-
    itiated U.S. action"
105 DISPLAY AT (8,2):"in World
    War II."
110 DISPLAY AT (9,2):" You are
    on board the"
115 DISPLAY AT (10,2):"first
    nuclear submarine,"
120 DISPLAY AT (11,2):"the
    U.S.S. Enterprise,"
125 DISPLAY AT (12,2):"as the
    Japanese forces"
130 DISPLAY AT (13,2):"begin
    their assault."
135 DISPLAY AT (14,2):" Your
    American sub is"
140 DISPLAY AT (15,2):"equip-
    ped with torpedoes and"
145 DISPLAY AT
    (16,2):"POLARIS SAM
    missiles."
150 DISPLAY AT (17,2):" The
    Japs are unaware of"
155 DISPLAY AT (18,2):"your
    presence; It is your"
160 DISPLAY AT (19,2):"respon-
    sibility to eliminate"
165 DISPLAY AT (20,2):"as many
    enemy patrols as"
170 DISPLAY AT
    (21,2):"possible."
175 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 5000 ::
    NEXT DELAY :: CALL
    CLEAR
180 DISPLAY AT (5,2):" To fire on
    a ship or Zero,"
185 CALL CHAR(64,
    "E7C3A51818A5C3E7")
190 DISPLAY AT (6,2):"position
    your sight ( ) on"
195 CALL HCHAR(6,25,64)
200 DISPLAY AT (7,2):"the target
    and press the"
205 DISPLAY AT (8,2):" 'FIRE'
    button."
210 DISPLAY AT (10,2):" BE YE
    FOREWARNED that the"
215 DISPLAY AT (11,2):"aim
    must be straight and"
220 DISPLAY AT (12,2):"true; A
    DIRECT HIT and"
225 DISPLAY AT (13,2):"ONLY a
    direct hit will"
230 DISPLAY AT (14,2):"destroy
    the target. A"
235 DISPLAY AT (15,2):"near
    miss will alter the"
240 DISPLAY AT (16,2):"speed
    and altitude of the"
245 DISPLAY AT (17,2):"aircraft,
    or change the"
250 DISPLAY AT (18,2):"direction
    of the aircraft"
255 DISPLAY AT (19,2):"carrier's
    motion."
260 DISPLAY AT (21,2):"...NO
    ONE SAID IT WAS EASY!"
265 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 4000 ::
    NEXT DELAY :: CALL
    CLEAR"
270 DISPLAY AT (5,2):" Each
    Japanese aircraft"
275 DISPLAY AT (6,2):"carrier
    which is destroyed"
280 DISPLAY AT (7,2):"will
    award you 500 points."
285 DISPLAY AT (8,2):" For
    each Zero shot out of"
290 DISPLAY AT (9,2):"the air,
    you will be"
295 DISPLAY AT (10,2):"awarded
    5,000 points."
300 DISPLAY AT (12,2):"Good
    luck with your mission,
    Commander!"
305 FOR DELAY = 1 to 3000 ::
    NEXT DELAY
310 CALL CLEAR
315 DISPLAY AT (10,3):"HOW
    MANY MINUTES DO YOU"
320 DISPLAY AT (11,3):"WISH
    THIS CONFLICT TO LAST,"
325 DISPLAY AT (13,3):"
    COMMANDER ";NAM$;"?"
330 INPUT JERRY
335 CALL CLEAR :: DISPLAY AT
    (11,5):"THANK YOU,
    ";NAM$
340 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 500 ::
    NEXT DELAY :: CALL
    CLEAR
345 MINU = 0
350 SCORE = 0
```

```
355 Z=5
360 CALL CLEAR
365 Q=15
370 CALL CHAR(64,
    "E7C3A51818A5C3E7")
375 CALL CHAR(96,
    "0070505ODF0000FF")
380 CALL CHAR(97,
    "0000000000FF300F")
385 CALL CHAR(98,
    "0000000000FF0CF0")
390 CALL CHAR(99,
    "FF")
395 CALL CHAR(100,
    "00000000000183E")
400 CALL CHAR(101,
    "00000000000187CFF")
405 CALL CHAR(102,
    "0080C07FF8")
410 GOSUB 715
415 GOSUB 770
420 GOSUB 845
425 GOSUB 780
430 CALL
    SPRITE(#1,64,9,84,140)
435 CALL JOYST(1,X,Y)
440 ET=ET+1
445 IF MINU  =JERRY THEN
    1050
450 IF ET  59 THEN
    MINU=MINU+1 :: GOSUB
    800
455 DISPLAY AT (21,4):
    "ELAPSED
    TIME:";MINU;":";ET
460 CALL MOTION(#1,-Y,X)
465 CALL KEY(1,K,S)
470 IF S=0 THEN 435
475 CALL SOUND(50,-6,0)
480 CALL
    DISTANCE(#1,#3,DIST1)
485 CALL
    DISTANCE(#1,#5,DIST2)
490 CALL
    DISTANCE(#5,20,53,DOWN)
    :: IF DOWN<=50 THEN
    GOSUB 815
495 CALL
    DISTANCE(#3,#5,DIST3)
500 IF DIST3  =100 THEN
    GOSUB 1160
505 IF DIST1<=60 THEN 520
510 IF DIST2<=160 THEN 520
515 GOTO 435
520 IF DIST1<20 THEN 545
525 IF DIST2<20 THEN 615
530 IF DIST1<60 THEN 590
535 IF DIST2<160 THEN 670
540 GOTO 435
545 CALL SOUND(750,-7,0)
550 CALL SCREEN(7)
555 GOSUB 1180
560 FOR DELAY=1 TO 500 ::
    NEXT DELAY
565 CALL SCREEN(8)
570 SCORE=SCORE+500
575 DISPLAY AT
    (20,4):"SCORE:";SCORE
580 GOSUB 780
585 GOTO 435
590 Z=-Z
595 CALL MOTION(#2,0,Z)
600 CALL MOTION(#3,0,Z)
605 CALL MOTION(#4,0,Z)
610 GOTO 435
615 CALL SOUND(750,-7,0)
620 CALL CHAR(102,
    "241C8E4FF442ECE3")
625 CALL MOTION(#5,20,Q)
630 FOR DELAY=1 TO 25
635 NEXT DELAY
640 CALL DELSPRITE(#5)
645 CALL CHAR(102,
    "0080C07FF8")
650 GOSUB 770
655 SCORE=SCORE+5000
660 DISPLAY AT (20,4):"SCORE:
    ";SCORE
665 GOTO 435
670 Q=Q+5 :: IF Q  120 THEN
    675 ELSE 680
675 Q=10
680 CALL MOTION(#5,-2,Q)
685 FOR DELAY=1 TO 80
690 CALL DISTANCE
    (#5,20,20,D) :: IF D<80
    THEN GOSUB 815
695 NEXT DELAY
700 CALL MOTION(#5,0,Q)
705 GOTO 435
710 CALL COLOR(9,2,1)
715 CALL HCHAR(11,1,99,31)
720 CALL HCHAR(10,1,101,3)
725 CALL HCHAR(10,4,100,2)
730 CALL HCHAR(10,7,101,1)
735 CALL HCHAR(10,8,100,2)
740 CALL HCHAR(10,11,101,8)
745 CALL HCHAR(10,20,100,3)
750 CALL HCHAR(10,23,101)
755 CALL HCHAR(10,24,100)
760 CALL HCHAR(10,25,101,4)
765 RETURN
770 FOR DELAY=1 TO 800 ::
    NEXT DELAY :: CALL
    SPRITE
    (#5,102,2,65,01,0,Q)
775 RETURN
780 CALL SPRITE
    (#2,97,2,84,02,0,Z)
785 CALL SPRITE
    (#3,96,2,84,09,0,Z)
790 CALL SPRITE
    (#4,98,2,84,16,0,Z)
795 RETURN
800 ET=0
805 RETURN
810 END
815 CALL MOTION(#5,5,Q)
820 FOR EXCALIBUR=1 TO 30
    :: NEXT EXCALIBUR
825 RETURN
830 CALL MOTION(#5,-5,Q)
835 FOR TDK=1 TO 75 :: NEXT
    TDK
840 RETURN
845 CALL CHAR(104,
    "FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF")
850 CALL COLOR(10,16,1)
```

```
855  CALL HCHAR(2,20,104,6)
860  CALL HCHAR(3,18,104,9)
865  CALL HCHAR(4,17,104,11)
870  CALL HCHAR(5,16,104,12)
875  CALL HCHAR(6,18,104,11)
880  CALL HCHAR(7,21,104,4)
885  CALL CHAR(128,
     "0F1F1F3F3F3F7F7F")
890  CALL CHAR(129,
     "000001010307070F")
895  CALL CHAR(130,
     "FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF")
900  CALL CHAR(131,
     "7FFFFFFFFFFFFFFF")
905  CALL CHAR(132,
     "00000103 0F1F1F3F")
910  CALL CHAR(133,
     "3F7FFFFFFFFFFFFF")
915  CALL CHAR(134,
     "000000000000010F")
920  CALL CHAR(135,
     "0000000003FFFFF")
925  CALL CHAR(136,
     "00000000F8FFFF")
930  CALL CHAR(137,
     "000000000000E0")
935  CALL CHAR(138,
     "FCFFFFFFFFFFFFFF")
940  CALL CHAR(139,
     "000080E0F0F8FCFE")
945  CALL CHAR(140,
     "0080C0C0E0F0F0F8")
950  CALL CHAR(141,
     "F8F8FCFCFCFEFEFF")
955  CALL COLOR(13,12,1)
960  CALL COLOR(14,12,1)
965  CALL HCHAR(10,5,128)
970  CALL HCHAR(9,5,129)
975  CALL HCHAR(10,6,130,6)
980  CALL HCHAR(9,6,131)
985  CALL HCHAR(9,7,130,5)
990  CALL HCHAR(8,6,132)
995  CALL HCHAR(8,7,133)
1000 CALL HCHAR(8,8,130,2)
1005 CALL HCHAR(7,7,134)
1010 CALL HCHAR(7,8,135)
1015 CALL HCHAR(7,9,136)
1020 CALL HCHAR(7,10,137)
1025 CALL HCHAR(8,10,138)
1030 CALL HCHAR(8,11,139)
1035 CALL HCHAR(9,12,140)
1040 CALL HCHAR(10,12,141)
1045 RETURN
1050 CALL CLEAR :: CALL
     DELSPRITE(ALL)
1055 DISPLAY AT(10,3):" YOU
     DID A VALIANT JOB AT"
1060 DISPLAY AT(11,2):"SEA,
     COMMANDER ";NAM$;"!"
1065 DISPLAY AT(13,2):"YOUR
     SCORE WAS ";SCORE
1070 DISPLAY AT(14,2):"DO
     YOU WISH TO TRY
     AGAIN?"
1075 INPUT TYPICAL$
1080 IF TYPICAL$="Y" then
     1130
1085 IF TYPICAL$="YES"
     THEN 1130
1090 IF TYPICAL$="SURE"
     THEN 1130
1095 IF TYPICAL$="OKAY"
     THEN 1130
1100 IF TYPICAL$="y" THEN
     1130
1105 IF TYPICAL$="yes" THEN
     1130
1110 IF TYPICAL$="sure"
     THEN 1130
1115 IF TYPICAL$="okay"
     THEN 1130
1120 IF TYPICAL$="ok" THEN
     1130
1125 END
1130 CALL CLEAR :: DISPLAY
     AT (10,1):"YOUR LOYALTY
     IS APPRECIATED"
1135 DISPLAY AT (12,3):"COM-
     MANDER ";NAM$;"."
1140 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 500
1145 NEXT DELAY
1150 CALL CLEAR
1155 GOTO 315
1160 CALL MOTION(#5,5,0)
1165 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 25 ::
     NEXT DELAY
1170 CALL MOTION(#5,0,0)
1175 RETURN
1180 CALL CHAR(97,
     "E21907F807996284")
1185 CALL CHAR(96,
     "5455BB7CBB555454")
1190 CALL CHAR(98,
     "8738C03FC0318C43")
1195 FOR DELAY = 1 TO 5 ::
     NEXT DELAY :: CALL
     DELSPRITE(#2,#3,#4)
1200 CALL CHAR(97,
     "00000000FF300F")
1205 CALL CHAR(96,
     "007050500DF00FF")
1210 CALL CHAR(98,
     "00000000FF0CF0")
1215 RETURN
1220 END
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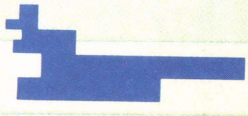

In order for us to consider your entry, we need the following items: a complete computer program, a brief game description, photographs or drawings of the graphics, a picture of you and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Send it all to: First Screening, Electronic Fun, *350 East 81st St., New York, NY 10028. Include your phone number so we can reach you.*

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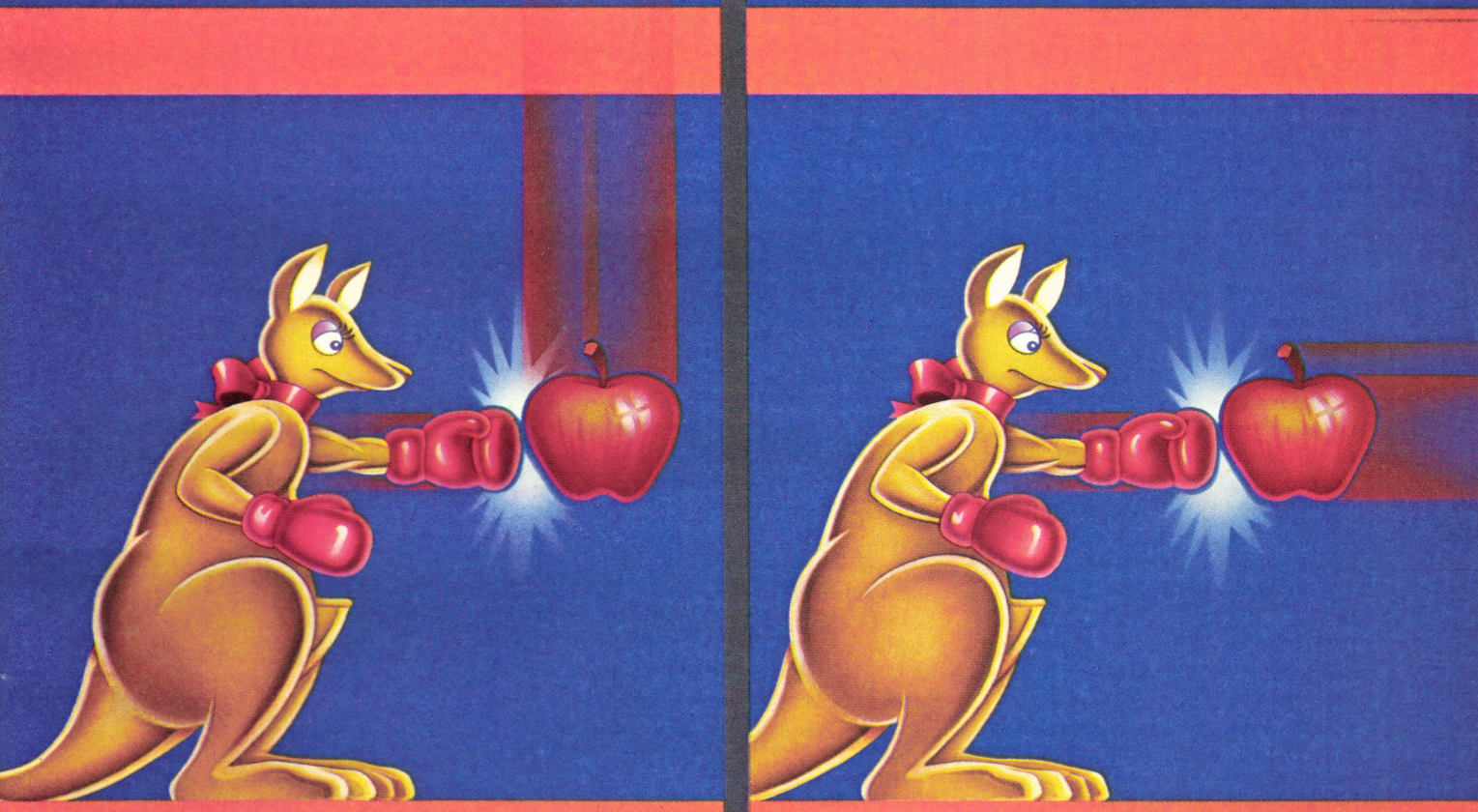

Which player is about to hit the jackpot?

Think quick. This two-fisted Kangaroo is a ringer for the one in the arcade. So don't pull your punches. Like the player on the right. He'll only score 100 points for punching a thrown apple. But the player on the left will score twice as many for punching a falling apple.

Only Atari makes Kangaroo for the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems, and a version exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.

So get Kangaroo. It's a knockout.

Here comes Kangaroo* from Atari®.

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SCREEN PLAYS

Continued from page 85

the white blocks perched atop these high structures; if you manage to hit all twenty of them, you are given a hefty 50,000-point bonus.

Remember that the towers are arranged in parallel corridors; if you've blasted quite a few but can't seem to find the last three or four, veer off hard to the right or left and you'll quickly come across the stragglers.

From there you'll move to the trench; defensive manuevering is the entire key to beating this sequence. Don't hesitate to fly out of the trench to avoid a high catwalk, or turn hard to port or starboard to avoid oncoming fireballs. Ignore the gun emplacements; they aren't worth the trouble. Putting torpedoes down the Death Star's tailpipe isn't hard, but if you're having trouble, just fly down the middle of the trench, keep your gunsight on the bottom of it, and fire like crazy. And you can safely ignore that last brace of fireballs at the very end of the trench; once you've loosed your torpedoes successfully, all five or six of the fireballs just dissolve into harmless sparklers.

The last thing to remember: Pay attention to the voice of Obi-Wan Kenobi. Luke's job is to destroy the Death Star, not to slaughter the entire Imperial force in a single-handed ship-to-ship combat. Unnecessary destructiveness is *not* using The Force.

DRAGON'S LAIR

Continued from page 15

in the game your commands will have an effect on Dirk's actions. I won't list them all because that would be like handing you a Rubik's Cube that was already solved. I will, however, clue you in on how to find a way around some of the obstacles.

First, use your ears when you play. Each time the game receives and registers an instruction you've given it, you'll hear a "clunk" sound. Also, be firm with the joystick.

Unlike most video games where you can, to an extent, work around your mistakes, there are but two alternatives in each situation you face in *Dragon's Lair*—either you did the right thing or the wrong thing. The wrong one almost always costs you a game life. Since it is rare that the consequences of a wrong move are anything less than death, you must pay close attention to how you time your moves.

While many of the situations in *Dragon's Lair* have pretty obvious solutions, it isn't enough to simply push the joystick/sword button as soon as you figure the solution out. There is always a narrow "time window" during which your action will safely extract Dirk from his sticky situation; nonaction during this "window," or action at any other time, will almost always end in death. Finding this "window" is actually pretty easy. It is usually (although not always) preceded by some definite movement on Dirk's part: crouching, turning, etc.

For instance, one sequence puts Dirk in a semicircular chute. In front of him are a bunch of large stone balls that roll perpetually back and forth across this U-shaped trench. As Dirk stands summing up the situation, a large black ball appears behind him. At this point you have two choices—either move toward the ball or move away from it. Both will result in death if you choose them too quickly. But if you wait until the large black ball is about to roll over Dirk and then pull back on the joystick, Dirk will be temporarily spared. At the same time he will begin his journey down the chute.

Later on, Dirk comes across a narrow catwalk with a pair of turnstiles on either side of it. These turnstiles, which look more like telephone poles fitted with boxing gloves, rotate at a high rate of speed. With each revolution, the two battering rams effectively cut Dirk off from what lies on the far side of the walkway. But since they spin at different speeds, there is a split second during each pass when Dirk can run through unscathed. The opportunity only comes once. When he first encounters this obstacle Dirk stands erect. When he crouches down like a cat ready to strike, move.□

JOYSTICK

Continued from page 31

accurate positioning.

The Joy-Sensor is a creative innovation and is fun to experiment with. However, I would categorize it as more of a novelty than as a bona fide controller and not one for hard core, neurotic point collectors.

ARCADE OR HANDHELD

In this section, we consider controllers that permit arcade-style use as well as handheld play. Most controls of this type have large bases and long joysticks. All have either non-skid rubber pads or suction cups.

Command Control, Red Ball and Power Grip A-, A

Wico is a producer of controls for the commercial arcade industry, a fact reflected in the responsiveness and ruggedness of their home game controllers. The three basic Wico controllers are virtually identical except for the shape of the joystick. All units have two firing buttons, one on the base and one on top of the joystick. A switch on the base selects which button is activated. The base is large, constructed of heavy-duty metal and supported by four non-skid rubber pads.

The Command Control has a baseball bat-shaped joystick. The more expensive Red Ball is apparently intended to emulate the ball-shape of many coin-op joysticks. I played at length with both controllers, but didn't detect any operating differences. The choice between these two excellent controllers, I believe, boils down to personal preference.

The Power Grip, though, is another matter. The ridged grip, with positions for each of the four fingers, gets my vote as *the* controller in this category. It's comfortable and a joy to operate. The trigger-shaped grip rotates (as do the Command Control and Red Ball grips), which allows for better control. All the other controllers in this category have trigger grips as well, but none, other than the Super Champ, rotates.

well, but none, other than the Champ, rotates.

Arcade-style players will hold the controller on a flat surface with one hand and operate the stick with the other. Players preferring true one-hand operation can use the firing button on top of the joystick. All three Wico controllers can also be held comfortably in the hand.

For those of you who can't make up your mind about joystick shape, Wico allows you to hedge. They produce a "Threeway Joystick Deluxe," which has three interchangeable handles: a bat handle and two trigger-types, one with ridges and one without.

The Boss A-

This joystick marks Wico's entry into the "popularly-priced" market. It is similar to the Power Grip with several exceptions: There is only one button, located on top of the joystick, the handle has the same shape as the Power Grip's, but it is slightly smaller, the base is smaller and the unit is lighter.

The Boss will appeal to gamers with smaller hands who aren't comfortable with larger grips, as well as to the budget-conscious.

Super Champ B+

The Super Champ from Championship Electronics is a solid one-hand arcade-style controller. It has a trigger grip with two buttons built into the joystick, one on top and one in front. (This allows players to use either the thumb or index finger for firing.) The grip rotates 360 degrees and can be operated while pointed in any direction. (Wico's rotating triggers must be pointed toward the "top" of the controller to operate properly.) Four small suction cups are built into the base, but they aren't strong enough to keep the unit consistently stationary. Also, the nearly 10-foot cord is fully retractable.

Though awkward for handheld operation, the Super Champ is an excellent arcade style controller.

Super Champ Remote B+

Championship Electronics also manufactures a remote control version of the Super Champ. This consists of a square receiver box that connects to the VCS and a standard Super Champ controller with a transmitter. Of course there are no cords.

PointMaster and PointMaster Pro B-, B+

Both of Discwasher's PointMasters are designed for one-handed play. The trigger handle is comfortable, although it does not have finger grooves. The joystick has an excessive amount of "play" and must be moved quite a distance before the object on the screen reacts. One gets the feeling that the stick might be pulled out of its socket in the excitement of a hotly-contested game, and the joystick action is loose and noisy.

The PointMaster Pro is similar in design to the PointMaster, with two additional features, rapid fire and suction cups.

The rapid fire didn't work with the consistency of the Zircon Z-Stick. (The Pro's rapid fire mode worked well with Atari's *Defender* and Imagic's *Star Voyager*, but not with Activision's *Spider Fighter*.) A red light reminds the player that the rapid fire mode is engaged. The suction cups stick well, but they periodically loosen when the action gets heavy.

RATINGS OF JOYSTICKS

CONTROLLER	OPERATION	DURABILITY	SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE
STRICTLY HAND-HELD			
Video Command	B	B	$ 9.95
Video Command Plus	B+	B	14.95
Z-Stick	A	A	19.95
Prostick II	C	A	24.95
Prostick III	C	A	29.95
Enjoystick	C-	C-	29.95
Power Stick	B+	A	9.99
MOSTLY HAND-HELD			
Kraft Series	B-	B	16.95-19.95
Slik Stik	C-	C-	9.95
Star Fighter	C-	A	14.95
TAC-2	C+	A	19.95
Atari	D	D	9.95
Joy-Sensor	D	A	34.95
ARCADE OR HAND-HELD			
Command Control	A-	A	29.95
Red Ball	A-	A	34.95
Power Grip	A	A	29.95
The Boss	A-	A	19.95
Super Champ	B+	B	16.95
Remote Control Super Champ	B+	B-	69.95
PointMaster	B-	B-	69.95
PointMaster Pro	B+	B-	27.95
Triga-Command	B	B	15.95
Quick Shot	C	B-	12.95
STRICTLY ARCADE			
Fire Command	A	A	49.95
Questar	A-	A	44.95
The Advantage	A-	B-	14.95

Triga-Command B

The Triga-Command from Electra Concepts is a massive controller with a large base and an enormous joystick. It's designed for one-hand arcade-type play and has four rubber pads. Three two-way suction cups are also included in the package.

The Triga-Command is an acceptable arcade-type unit. The firing button is activated by the index finger of the hand operating the joystick. The button has a good, positive response, but it feels and sounds "springy" and is noisy to operate.

The trigger-shaped firing button will probably feel comfortable to players with large hands. The stick, however, has a lot of play. Care must be taken to keep the non-operating hand away from the base of the joystick to prevent interference with its movement. It is necessary to use one hand to hold the unit to a flat surface because the suction cups give occasionally. In so doing, the player's hand may get sore from pressing against the sharp corner of the square base.

The manufacturer obviously stands behind the Triga-Command. They advise me that they have introduced a 30-day money back guarantee, which, as far as I know, is unique in the joystick industry.

Quick Shot C

Spectravideo's Quick Shot has features which make it usable for both styles of play. For arcadians, four suction cups are provided to replace the unit's rubber pads (as with all controller suction cups, they occasionally come loose). For hand-holders, Quick Shot is small enough to be held comfortably. The left edge of the base has been rounded and grooved, so the unit can be held comfortably and securely.

While the joystick is sensitive, the firing buttons are not. The two buttons, one on the base and one on the top of the stick, both operate at all times. They must be depressed with considerable pressure before they'll engage. Players with a light touch will miss numerous shots because of the insensitive buttons.

While hand-holding Quick Shot, I had no trouble in games (such as *Planet Patrol*) where rapid firing was possible. But it was difficult to do well in games like *River Raid* which require maneuvering *and* sporadic firing.

Quick Shot is more effective when resting on a surface. Regardless of the style of play, the unit can be used only by right-handed players.

STRICTLY ARCADE

I reviewed three products which are intended solely for table-top play. Two are controller consoles; the third is a housing into which controllers are inserted.

Fire Command A

The Fire Command from Gim Electronics is a large control console made out of die-cast metal. It has left- and right-handed fire buttons and a joystick topped with a large ball. The heavy unit—nearly five pounds—is designed for authentic one-hand arcade operation. Four large non-skid rubber pads on the bottom help keep the console stationary in nearly all situations.

The Fire Command comes about as close to a coin-op control system as is possible in a home unit. It has a ball joystick in the center, identical in feel to the joysticks of coin-op *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong*. The two fire buttons look, feel and operate identically to those of many coin-op games. (I was told that these components are the same as those actually installed in coin-op units.)

The first thing I tested, of course, was whether the Fire Command permits true one-handed operation. Testing it on games where only the joystick is used (e.g., *Pac-Man* and *Tapeworm*), I found that with side-to-side motion it remained totally stable. When the joystick is pushed up (north), however, the unit sometimes would jump from the table. For this reason, it is preferable to rest the non-operating hand on the unit to provide additional stability.

It is a true joy to play with Fire Command. Never have I been able to control the airship in *Planet Patrol* so subtly, and I set new high scores in *Megamania* and *Seaquest*. For arcade-type players, Fire Command is about as close to the ultimate controller as exists today. It's also expensive.

Questar Control Console A-

The Questar console is also similar to coin-op controls. The console is longer and wider than the Fire Command, but it weighs far less, constructed from a non-metallic lightweight material. Like the Fire Command, there is a joystick in the center and two firing buttons, one on each side.

The joystick switches and buttons are the same as those used in coin-op games, and the sensitivity of the joystick is adjustable.

The manufacturer states that Questar was designed to be held in the lap, and it works well this way. When put on a flat surface it jumps around unless held in place. So two hands are required in games such as *Pac-Man*. (In firing games, the weight of the second hand on the firing button tends to hold the console in place.) I had a lot of trouble playing *River Raid*; whenever I sped up or slowed down, the plane would also move horizontally, crashing into the river bank. This may have been due to the switch setting, which you may be able to correct.

The Advantage A-

The Advantage (R. Dobson & Co.) is a plastic device into which is inserted an Atari VCS, Wico or PointMaster controller. I have trouble screwing in a light bulb, but found that even I could handle installing the joystick. Only four screws (supplied) are needed. When assembled, the player sits on the wings of the unit. This holds it in place and makes true one-handed operation possible for joystick-only games.

If the firing button is required, two hands must be used with the Atari VCS inserted in The Advantage. However, if the PointMaster or Wico controller is used, one hand operation is still possible since the firing button is at the top of the joystick. (This isn't even possible in coin-op games!)□

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UNKNOWN ARCADER

Continued from page 37

was there (high score: 197,210) and *Phoenix* (high score: 261,054). There was also a row of midget machines - *Donkey Kong* and *Centipede*. "Shorties!" I said to myself.

"What'd you call me?" asked an unshaven, small person with murder in his eye.

"Shor—is a nice day!" I said and beat a hasty retreat.

Don't get confused but there are three Playlands around Times Square. The one between 47th and 48th Streets on Broadway used to be called Fascination and is still called that by old-timers, though the sign above the dripping air conditioner clearly says "Playland." (New Yorkers are stubborn—most still call Avenue of the Americas "Sixth Avenue" and if you tell a cabbie to take you to "Idlewild" he won't even blink.)

Anyway, Playland "B" is a petri dish for street culture. Like Playland "A", the clientele runs the gamut from super chic to human crustacean. I personally prefer Playland "B" to Playland "A" (the same Fred owns both) for two reasons: It's not as cramped and noisy and it's got more interesting machines. Recent releases include *Roc 'N Rope*, the weird *Hunchback, Zoo Keeper, Mappy, Crystal Castles* and the beautiful *Juno First*, the only game whose screen looks like the lights of L.A. Three guesses what laserdisc game attracted the biggest crowd. There are also some classic games I didn't see anywhere else, like *Pengo*, and *Amidar*.

I tried in vain to beat the high score on a cigarette-singed *Q*Bert* machine: 2,047,900. *Tempest* also showed signs of a recent virtuoso performance 937,055. A *FAX* quiz game sat like Buddha in the center of the room where an unemployed D.J. crumbled under the machine's heavy load of trivia.

"Multiple choice: What is critical mass?" asked the machine.

"A religious ceremony," answered the vinyl spinner.

Should you be unlucky enough to find yourself at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 42nd Street some balmy night. While You Wait is just a stairway away. This 45-year-old arcade is in the entrance to the subway and, like much of the transit system, While You Wait is slated for renewal. At the moment it can provide a quick fix for the video junkie or a trip down memory lane for people who remember the primordial ooze. I mean—some of these machines have been there for forty years, like *Grandma's Predictions* and the *Love Teller*. (For a dime it will tell you you're "hot stuff.")

But time has not completely forgotten this strange haunt. There was *Gyruss, Moon Patrol, Star Wars* and *Champion Baseball* beneath the dusty fans—forty-five eclectic machines in all. An odd sign hung in a dark corner: "No dancing. No standing between machines." Frankly the place didn't make me want to kick up my heels and cancan, but, as for standing—there was no place to stand *except* between the machines. Was an undercover cop going to crawl out from under a cover and slap bracelets on me?

Just for kicks I tried a ten cent non-electronic rifle game called *Jungle*. The targeted wild kingdom included a fearsome gorilla, a tiger, a rhino and a Greyhound luggage tag. I bagged the tag good, and hope to mount it in my trophy room next to a cold I recently caught.

On the fashionable Upper East Side of Manhattan (spitting distance from the *EF* offices) is a "video game showroom" called Electronic Game Center. For all intents and purposes it's an arcade, except for zoning reasons it's called a "showroom" and every machine is actually for sale. It's at the corner of 77th Street and First Avenue in a modest storefront with a paper sign in the window saying, simply, "Video Games." The 30 machines are token operated. For every dollar you spend on tokens, you get a coupon. Save up 5,000 coupons and take *Xevious* home in your little red wagon.

A lot of popular machines are not around but the selection was interesting enough for even a jaded arcader like myself: *Bagman, Bosconian, Tutankham, Satan's Hollow, Bump 'N Jump, Front Line, Ms. Pac-Man. Moon Patrol* was on sale for $2,995, in case you want to do some early Christmas shopping.

This video supermarket is open 24 hours a day and the crowd that congregates there tends to be pretty well-behaved. I saw more unescorted young kids than at any of the other places in town. It's near one of CBS's studios so some of the soap opera stars come in after death or between divorces and operations. Paul Newman and Luther Vandross have also been seen there—not together.

So, confident that the home fires were still burning brightly, I turned my sneakers toward new ports. Time to move on. Time to get snow tires. Time is of the essence, but time is on my side. And sometime soon that perfect arcade will reveal itself to me and I'll know then that it's time to abandon this mad highway life.□

COMPUTER WORKOUT

Continued from page 41

joystick can be removed and you can press one of the four finger pads.

A very good feature of the joystick is that when it's not being used in games, it can be used to move the cursor around the screen. Couple this with a good screen editor that is included in the operating system, and writing and modifying BASIC programs becomes a snap. Talking about BASIC, you should know that the BASIC that comes with the SV-318 is quite good. It is an extended Microsoft BASIC with a lot of extra features in it that make programming and game writing in BASIC easier to do.

Exactly which version of BASIC it is however, is unclear. The BASIC Reference Manual supplied refers to two BASICs—one as BASIC86 and one as BASICA. When questioned on this, Spectravideo said that it was neither of

Continued on page 98

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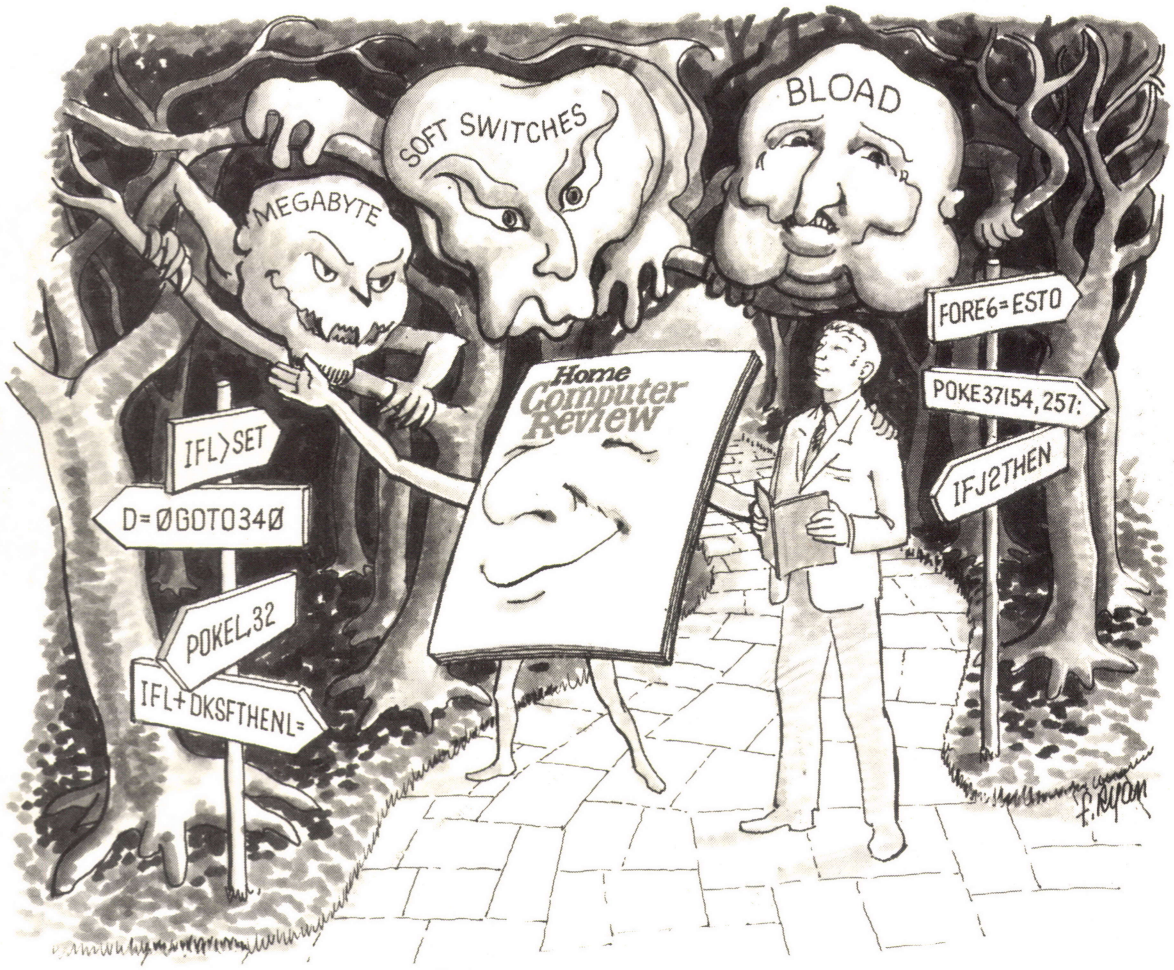

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COMPUTER WORKOUT

Continued from page 96

those—which were earlier versions of BASIC—and that it was simply SV BASIC. If that's the case, they ought to refrain from confusing the consumer by renaming the chapter in the BASIC Reference Manual which is currently titled, "BASICA COMMANDS, STATEMENTS AND FUNCTIONS." In addition, they ought to remove references to BASIC86 that appear in the manual.

The BASIC Reference Manual, one of the most important tools a user can have, is poorly prepared and presented. It and the User's Manual contain numerous spelling and grammatical errors, hardly the thing you want to expose young receptive minds to. And you don't have to search far to find them. On page 2 in big bold letters is the word INTRDUCTION. But spelling and grammar are not all.

When questioned on the computer's ability to use 144K or 256K of RAM, Spectravideo said that the memory is available to BASIC through the use of a special command called SWITCH. Searching through the manual, which has no index, resulted in the discovery that the command is not mentioned anywhere. On checking the User's Manual, however, a table of reserved BASIC keywords was found. (Why it was in the User's Manual and not in the BASIC manual is hard to understand.)

After finding the SWITCH command in a table, however, the user is given no clue as to what the command does or how to use it. The SWITCH command is not alone—many other commands are included in this table but not mentioned anywhere in the BASIC Reference Manual. They include: BIN$, CLICK, MOTOR, TIME, VPOKE and VPEEK. *Not* included in the table of reserved BASIC keywords is a function, described in the BASIC Manual, called CSRLIN, which returns the current line position of the cursor.

As with most new computers that are not designed to be compatible with anything that currently exists on the market, the SV-318 has very little software available for it. The built-in game cartridge slot is not compatible with anything else currently available and the only games that can be used in it are two cartridges available from Spectravideo at $29.95. For $80 however, you can buy a cassette recorder that can be connected to the computer. However, there are only a few cassette games available right now.

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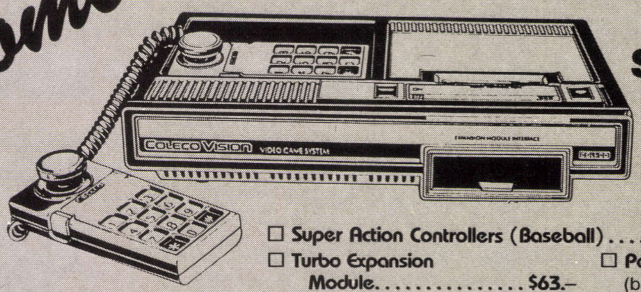

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actually getting for that price, it's quite expensive. With the expansion box, up to seven different peripherals can be connected to the SV-318 computer. Interfaces planned include a floppy disk controller, Centronics parallel printer interface, RS 232 interface, IEEE 488 interface, 80 column graphic display interface and Coleco game-cartridge adapter.

The expansion module itself is a big plastic box that contains a circuit board with seven, 50-pin connectors on it, and a built-in voltage regulator. A transformer must be installed in the box by the user, who plugs it into the voltage regulator circuit. The transformer is mounted in the box on raised plastic supports which are not very strong. One was already broken in the test unit. The manual that comes with the expansion unit is short on words, but has a lot of clear pictures that more than make up for the lack of text. It's too bad, however, that the unit in the pictures was somewhat different than the one that was provided. The manual shows how to install the RF modulator inside the expansion box but there's no designated spot for it to sit—it just floats around free. Since it has a metal case, it's quite possible that the modulator could wind up shorting something out. While the expansion interface was provided, no expansion memory or peripheral devices were, so it was not possible to test its operation. It would be helpful if Spectravideo provided some lettering near the power switch to tell you which position was the ON position and which was OFF. No LED power indicator is provided on the expansion module, either.

"In six months Spectravideo should be able to get its act together and clean up its hardware design and its manuals."

Considering the RF interference problems that at least early versions of the computer have, the poor and confusing quality of the BASIC manual, the lack of any sizable number of programs and the lack of peripheral interfaces for the computer, this reviewer has no choice but to recommend that you wait a while before buying this computer. In six months Spectravideo should be able to get its act together and clean up its hardware design and its manuals. It will also have had time to produce the various peripheral interfaces it is promising. Finally, it will give you time to peruse ads and see if any of the major software vendors are supporting the computer, and if the Japanese agree to standardization. If they do, you can be assured of a nice flow of interesting software.□

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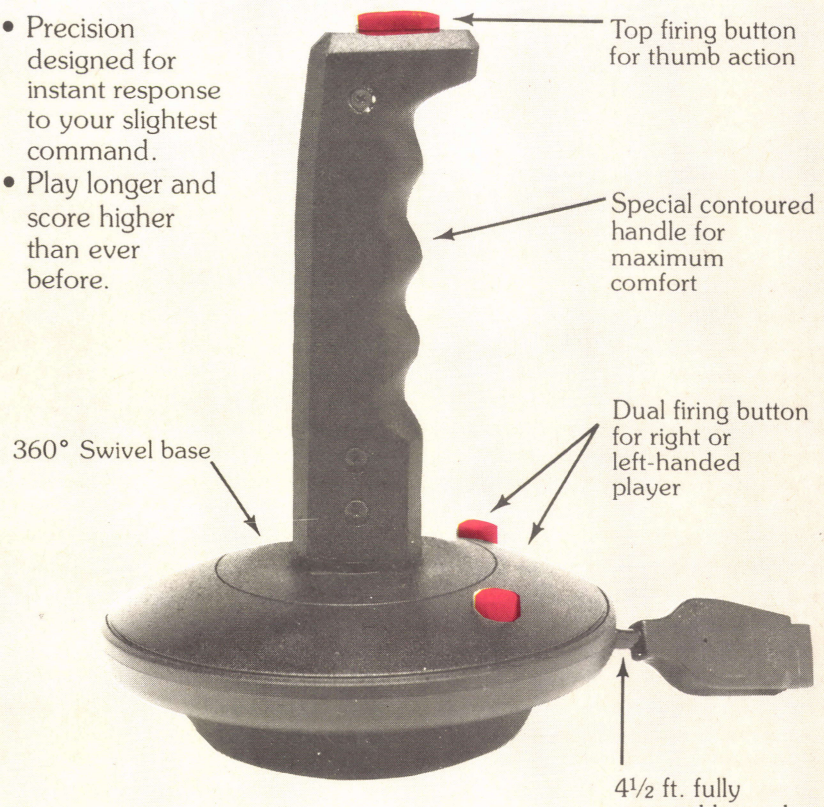

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GAME WORKOUT

Continued from page 46

them-to-bits contest. A large asteroid is but seven hours away from colliding with Earth. Your mission—engage and destroy the rock before it smashes into your home planet. Naturally, you have been hand-picked for this assignment, but no one, no matter how qualified he or she might be, "just takes off in a billion dollar military rocket." First you must navigate through the usual red tape. And let's not forget physical training. Astronauts aren't born, they're made. They have to acquire "the right stuff." Your quest begins at Mission Control. By rummaging through this military installation, you'll find (hopefully) all the items you'll need to perform the task—"gloves and everything," as Mel Brooks' astronaut says.

Armchair spies aren't left out, either. Sirius Software, long established as a purveyor of top-notch arcade style action games, currently offers two spy adventure games both of which are staged in modern times. The first is *Kabul Spy*. You are an agent searching Afghanistan for one Dr. Paul Eisenstadt, a top scientist. Intelligence blames the KGB for his disappearance. Since Professor Eisenstadt possesses a lot information of a sensitive nature he must be found quickly. The game was thoughtfully programmed with the adventurer's needs in mind. Special commands such as "brief," abound. (In this mode the player can call up an abbreviated text description after a room has been visited.)

Movie buffs will notice a striking number of parallels between 1982's *The Soldier* and Sirius' other modern day adventure, *Critical Mass*. In this game you are on the trail of a sicko who, for no apparent reason, has decided to nuke the world's five largest cities. He asks for no ransom—he simply likes to detonate the bombs. You have only nine computer days to prevent Armageddon. Unlike most adventure games, *Critical Mass* contains a number of arcade action sequences as well as the usual text and descriptive screens. Adventure game purists might view this as an act of blasphemy, but first time adventurers may like this mix.

Among the first and most well-known companies making computer adventure games is Adventure International, home of the famous Scott Adams Graphic Adventures (SAGA) series.

With *Adventureland*, AI has done a very considerate thing. Rather than expect fledgling adventurers to solve a game of great intricacy, unearthing clues that only seasoned players would recognize, AI has created a game that is for novices. This is not to say that it's easy. By no means. It's difficult but not so difficult that you will give up in frustration when you find that you absolutely cannot figure out how to pick up the bull from the swamp and that no matter what you do you're doomed to sink out of sight into the quicksand forever. The solutions are not readily obvious but they are there and they require the type of thinking that hones your skills, sharpening them for more complex games in the future.

Go East Young Person

Adventureland starts you out in a forest. You can climb trees but you can only exit to the east. You come upon a sleeping dragon and a cryptic message about mud. Later, you'll find a cypress tree in a swamp that is rotten with chiggers. The object is to collect the treasures and bring them back to a tree stump which says "Put treasures here". All objects that are treasures are denoted by asterisks at either side, for example, *Rubies*. Many treasures are easy to find as they have been hidden in plain sight. This is the gratifying part that makes you feel all-powerful and inspires you to charge ahead and look for those other treasures that are somewhat more efficiently hidden. Fantasy abounds with magic words and genies floating in and out as if they were reality. One word of advice: Don't be greedy.

In *Pirate Adventure*, AI has put together yet another very intriguing game. Beginning incongruously in a London flat you must magically transport yourself to Pirate's Island in pursuit of Long John Silver's treasure. As usual, you've got to carry these treasures back to a designated check point. Parrots, pirates, changing tides and your safety sneakers all aid you in your quest. Want a hint? Parrots be smart, matey. That's all you'll hear from me.

MicroLab publishes its games under the name MicroFun and has added an excellent text/graphics adventure game to its line: *Death in the Caribbean*. In it you once again have to collect a certain number of treasures in order to win the game. You also have to avoid being eaten by cannibalistic ants (among other predators) out to thwart you. The game is imbued with a delightful sense of humor and comes back with some very witty wisecracks if you try to perform certain tasks that are not permitted. For example, try to dig somewhere and the computer tells you not to mess up the landscape by digging here. Try to climb a tree and it warns you against messing with the trees.

Similarly, Penguin Software is not limiting itself simply to nifty graphics programs. It's got its own entries in the adventure category. *Transylvania* is an eerie game which takes place in the legendary home of Count Dracula and all the other seedy types whose culinary tastes run to very rare flesh. And Dracula does show up in the game as does a werewolf with tracking powers that would make Sam Spade jealous. You've got to progress carefully through the spooky landscape looking for hidden treasures and picking up useful objects—such as garlic—along the way.

Penguin also has one of the best-looking graphic-type adventures around, *The Quest*. Cast as the sneaky adviser of a big, dumb hero named Gorn, it's your job to pursue and kill a nasty dragon that has been laying waste to an extremely troubled kingdom. Apart from being the one adventure I've seen where a character can actually purchase a

Continued on page 101

map of the land he's travelling through (he can pick one up at the local cartographer's shop), *The Quest* features a really extensive game vocabulary, well over 200 different locations, and truly beautiful graphics screens. How the game's three authors managed to include such complex screens without making concessions on vocabulary is a mystery, but whatever the technique used, this is probably one of the best combinations of graphics and text around.

Sirius also makes *Blade of Blackpoole* in which you have to scour an Arthurian country in order to find the Jewel of Selmarn. You can talk to plants as well as people but no one, it seems, really knows where you ought to begin.

Wizardry can be played by up to six people, but my experience dictates that play is infinitely more enjoyable when only one or two play at any given time. The game allows you to create your own characters—up to 20 different individuals.

As the select group of adventurers wanders through the maze they will encounter a wide array of monsters and accumulate experience. Certain characters can cast spells while others can neutralize those cast by monsters.

A friend of mine (who, by the way, assisted me with the research for this article) has been playing the same game of *Wizardry* for over a year. All-night sessions are not uncommon. On any given day he logs one hour or more on the keyboard. Naturally, his band of characters has built up some rather impressive statistics over the last twelve months, his champion fighter, Maelstrom, has tallied over two billion experience points. Only recently has he captured what he believes to be the Big Prize of his quest, but still he plays on.

Although he considers it unlikely, my friend will someday shelve *Wizardry* for a new challenge. This brings us to the one inescapable downfall inherent in all adventure games—once you solve the puzzle, there's never any reason to go back and do it all over again. Solving an adventure in the end can be an anticlimax. □

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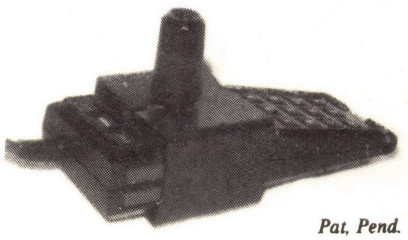

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GAMEMAKER

Continued from page 57

JF: That's a good question in lots of ways. Several things come to mind. One of them is the question of recognition. Most of the bigger companies have pursued this thing with corporate identification and no credit to anyone else. You know it's an Atari game, period. You never hear about the person who did the game design, the programming, the cover, anything. It's an Atari game. Everyone else is invisible. From our point of view this is certainly a mistake. When a new movie comes out nobody's going to see it simply because it was made by MGM. They're going to see it because it's George Lucas' latest work or whatever. And that's very rewarding for the people on the creative end—not being ignored. If Electronic Arts succeeds in "raising the consciousness", you'll find that there are people out there doing creative work. Another thing is the originality, quality and depth. It is possible and desirable to do games that have a lot to them, games that aren't just rip-offs from the arcades. Game design as a discipline has been so misunderstood that you have people doing rip-offs and being given credit as game designers when, in fact, in some cases, game design is not what they are doing at all. Maybe you're doing program design, even fairly sophisticated program design, and you're certainly doing a lot of work, but game design is not on your list. Whoever did the original game is the person who did the game design.

EF: Is Paul Reiche a D&D player like you, Jon?

JF: Among other things. Paul actually worked for TSR for a year. He also did one of the expansion kits that Automated put out for *Hellfire Warrior.*

EF: What were his contributions to ARCHON?

JF: Typically, it is very difficult to separate pieces of the game that are mine or his because a lot of the time that was a product of our back and forth discussions. Among other things, Paul came up with most of the preliminary board design. The final design is a slight modification by me of one of Paul's board layouts. He did a lot of the initial graphics, the original drawings for the 16 different pieces. He didn't do all the graphics or the animation, but he drew pictures of what the creatures were going to look like. He and I both came up with the pieces, their powers, etc. Paul also probably play-tested the game more than anyone else.

EF: He's a game nut?

JF: Right.

EF: Who was the first to beat the ARCHON computer opponent?

JF: Joe Ybarra. He's a producer at Electronic Arts and a hard-core gamer of all sorts of persuasions. He is certainly a top *Archon* player. He's the person for whom we designed some specific things to keep the computer from being beaten "as easily." I hadn't thought that was going to be a problem. I think he played *Archon* about 40 or 50 times in one weekend, so he's a real game player. The enthusiasm at Electronic Arts is very good.

EF: To me, two of the most fascinating features of ARCHON are the luminosity cycle and the fact that neither side has the same playing pieces. Why aren't the two armies identical?

JF: In part for the theme and in part because it *could* be done, and would be different from chess. We were trying to come up with pieces or images—traditional monster figures—that would be associated with, depending on your interpretation, good or light or air or whatever on one side, and evil or darkness on the other, again to represent a symbolic struggle. It didn't seem particularly appropriate to have the same pieces on both sides.

EF: Where does the idea for the luminosity cycle (which changes the advantage of attacks on key squares) come from?

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GAMEMAKER

Continued from page 102

JF: One of the connections was that from the beginning we wanted to do a fantasy chess game on a board and then go to a tactical display—a combat arena—to resolve each combat. One of the things we wanted was a board that changed in some fashion, partly because that's one of the things you couldn't do with a traditional board game. We wanted to make a game that would really be different, something to be looked on as a computer game, not a board game. The luminosity cycle came in part from what the Atari could do, because the Atari has both color and luminance controls, which is something a lot of other computers (like the Commodore 64 we're currently struggling with) don't have.

EF: Jon, you once played the part of King's Pawn in a giant game of human chess where you had to physically battle any opposing pieces that were "moved" into contact with you. Does that event relate to the creation or design of ARCHON?

JF: Actually, it does relate. At the time I thought that was a really neat experience, the live action and the concept. You had the set-up of this strategy game, but eventually you have to fight things out hand-to-hand. That's just one of those things that got stuck in a file in the back of my mind and sat there waiting to be used. After 15 years, it came out as *Archon*.

EF: Do you two ever play ARCHON against each other?

AW: Yes. One thing I like about *Archon* is the pace. It's not a constant stress situation where you're always firing at or avoiding certain things. You have time to think about making a move on the strategic board before going to the tactical board to "slug it out." You get some excitement on the tactical board—you bop somebody over the head a couple of times—but then you go back to the strategic board and think some more. It's not a case of "lose your three lives and the game is over." You have a lot of pieces. So what if you lose one. You can resurrect it anyway! □

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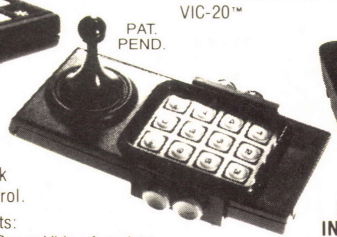

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in the cart of your choice, wait for the skill screen, press the "9" and "*" keys at the same time, and the "0" and "#" keys together right after. Then gird yer grid fer a big one . . . How many different Atari coin-ops had **PONG** somewhere in the title? Answer next month (no, wisenheimers, the answer isn't "one") . . .

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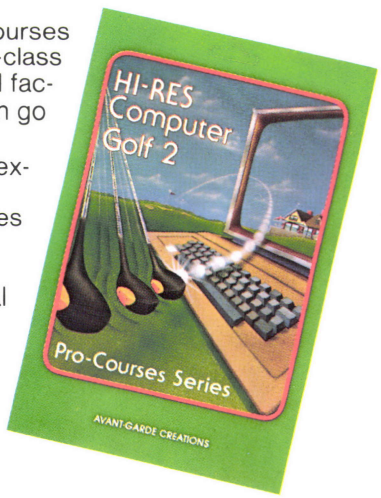

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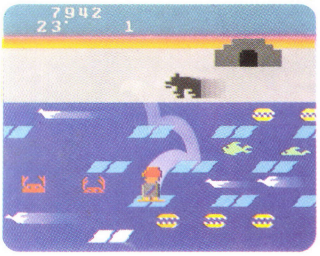

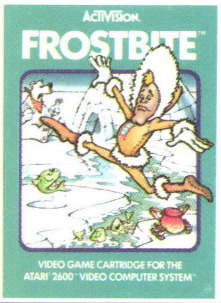

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Pictured here are a few people who have come as close to earning it as anyone we know. They are people who expect—even presume—a deeper involvement of your imagination. They envision programs that will teach you by experience rather than memorization. They want to blur the traditional distinctions between art and entertainment and education and fantasy.

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In short, they are people who may, over the next decade or so, change your life. And for that reason, you should know them.

MIKE ABBOT and MATT ALEXANDER

(far left, front and back row) are from San Diego. They know a thing or two about gravity.

They know about the work ethic and how people like vandals and OSHA Inspectors can get in its way. And they used this knowledge, along with a large measure of charm, to devise a surprisingly funny, habit-forming game known as HARD HAT MACK. Bet you can't play it just once.

DAN BUNTEN

(second from left, top row) is but one part of Ozark Softscape, the guys who created M.U.L.E. What they've made here is a race to settle a distant planet, full of opportunities to fleece and sandbag the people dear to you. *Creative Computing* said "the graphics, sound, and humor are superlative." But that's little comfort when your Dad's got all the food and he's starving you into oblivion.

JOHN FIELD

(bottom row, second from the left) is not afraid of relentlessly attacking hunters and spores. He's not afraid of bats or fire lizards or robots and their nutty death beams. He's not afraid of them because he made them all. They're part of AXIS ASSASSIN and THE LAST GLADIATOR—things that came out of his own head as he lived his teenage life in Palo Alto, California, and drove the rim of the continent in his real fast, red car.

ELECTRO

Available for Apple, Atari, a

FARTHER

BILL BUDGE *(top row, far right)* is something of a hero within the burgeoning software movement. He's done things with code that cause veteran designers to blink in disbelief. Maybe his accomplishments are the result of his nearly poetic talents in the arcane algebra of machine language, or maybe they're the outgrowths of things he thinks about—like software friends, whole universe inventions and the emotional values of computerdom. Whatever the causes, there is general agreement that his PINBALL CONSTRUCTION SET is the most powerful program ever written for an 8-bit machine. If you're the least bit skeptical of what these computers are really worth, you ought to watch PINBALL in action. You'll see.

ANNE WESTFALL *(second from right, back row)* is something of a sorceress. Her raw materials are the ambitious and idealistic gaming concepts that proliferate at Free Fall Associates. Her magic takes place in a thunderclap of code. Her most recent creation is ARCHON, a program that combines the strategy of chess with the white-hot action of arcade combat. Oh, by the way, one of the key characters in ARCHON is a sorceress. Imagine that.

JON FREEMAN *(third from left, top row)* dreamed of a computerized who-done-it that wouldn't wear out after thousands of plays. He wanted it to have complex, shifting motives, characters with elements of personality, and he wanted it to happen on a dirigible. With the help of his friends at Free Fall Associates, he got it. The name is MURDER ON THE ZINDERNEUF and it never happens the same way twice.

DAVID MAYNARD *(arms folded)* never intended that his innocently entitled WORMS? should become the Air Force's secret I.Q. test for alien species. He does not endorse the wanton gambling cult that has sprung up around this product. And he deeply regrets the inhumane uses it has been put to by the Bulgarian Secret Police. "WORMS?," he says, "was only meant as a lighthearted exploration of limited artificial intelligence using pretty light and simple music." Right, David.

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d Commodore computers.

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